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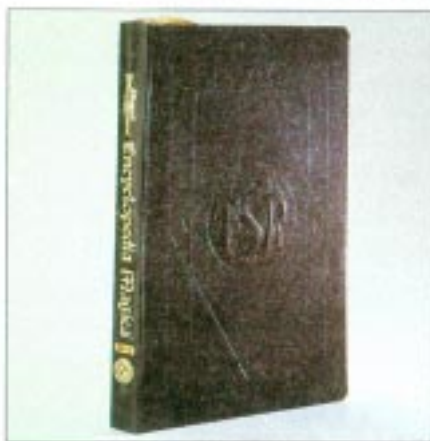
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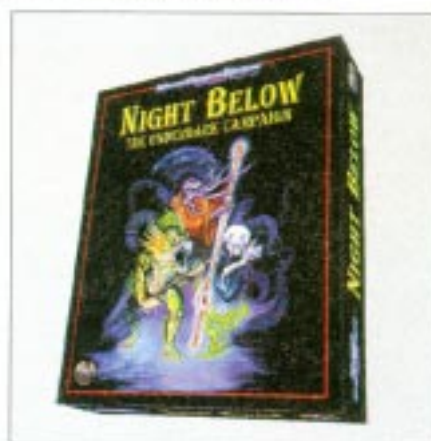
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Dragon

MAGAZINE

Issue #224
Vol. XX, No. 7
December 1995

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TSR, Inc.

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SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

10 **The Castle Designer's Guide to Coping with Magic and the Supernatural—Jeffrey Allen Paul**
Medieval architects never had to worry about attackers riding dragons, or with wands of fireballs. How can a fantasy castle designer cope?

18 **Elven Cities & Settlements—Steve Miller**
This random generator provides a quick solution to designing customized elven cities.

26 **Sleep of Ages—Steven Schend**
Explore dwarven tombs built by master architects, and learn the secrets of their deadly traps.

FICTION

86 **The Third Law of Power —Richard Parks**
Marta sought wisdom, and thereby power; but would the Basilisk Oracle grant her request?

REVIEWS

34 **Role-Playing Reviews — Rick Swan**
Rick looks at WotC's Everway and TSR's BIRTHRIGHT™

56 **From the Forge—Ken Carpenter**
A double feature this month: Horrific holdovers from Halloween, and a year-end look at the best in the business.

Dragon® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly by TSR, Inc., 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States of America and Canada except subscription orders is: DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, U.S.A.; telephone (414) 248-3625; fax (414) 248-0389. The postal address for all materials from Europe is: DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom; telephone: (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (International); telex: 818761; fax (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 414-223. 238066 (international).

Distribution: DRAGON Magazine is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distribution to the book trade in the United Kingdom is by TSR Ltd. Send orders to: Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A.; telephone: (800) 733-3000. Newsstand distribution throughout the United

Kingdom is by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE, United Kingdom; telephone: 0895-444055.

Subscription: Subscription rates via second-class mail are as follows: \$30 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S.; \$38 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in Canada; £21 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £30 for 12 issues sent to an address in Europe; \$50 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address, or \$90 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent air mail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. Methods of payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR, Inc., or charges to valid Mastercard or VISA credit cards; send subscription orders with payments to TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 5695, Boston MA 02206, U.S.A. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include cheques or money orders made payable to TSR Ltd., or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card; send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd., as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue expiration of each subscription is printed on the mailing label of each subscriber's copy of the

FEATURES

- 8** **FIRST QUEST™**—Steve Jackson
Fond memories of brigand-bashing and puzzle-pondering.
- 23** **DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN™** : The Flame Sword of Lloth—M.D. McConnohie
Take an early look at Interplay's soon-to-be-released 3-D computer game, in which you can battle Lloth's minions.
- 42** **A Thousand and One Words**—Mike Shema
Don't just say "I hit the orc". . . it's dull. Being colorful in your descriptions can add a whole new dimension to your game.
- 53** **Bazaar of the Bizarre: Natural Endowments**—Steve Berman
Magical items for the more nature-oriented or primitive sets.
- 66** **The History of the Rod of Seven Parts**—Skip Williams
Here's the inside story of the AD&D® game's best-known artifact, from the man who may—or may not—have created it in the first place.
- 72** **The Chronology of Krynn**—Harold Johnson and Sue Weinlein
Ever wonder about which of those **DRAGONLANCE®** stories came first, and what happened when?
- 100** **Sage Advice**—Skip Williams
This month, the sage tackles questions on the **DRAGONLANCE®** campaign, and on gaming and Real Life.
- 114** **The Ecology of the Lammasu**—Belinda G. Ashley
These lion-men, powerful protectors of law and good, stand watch over those who need protecting.

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 4 Letters | 95 Floyd |
| 6 Editorial | 106 DragonMirth |
| 42 Forum | 108 Yamara |
| 76 Rumblings | 110 Gamers' Guide |
| 83 Convention Calendar | 119 TSR Previews |

magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

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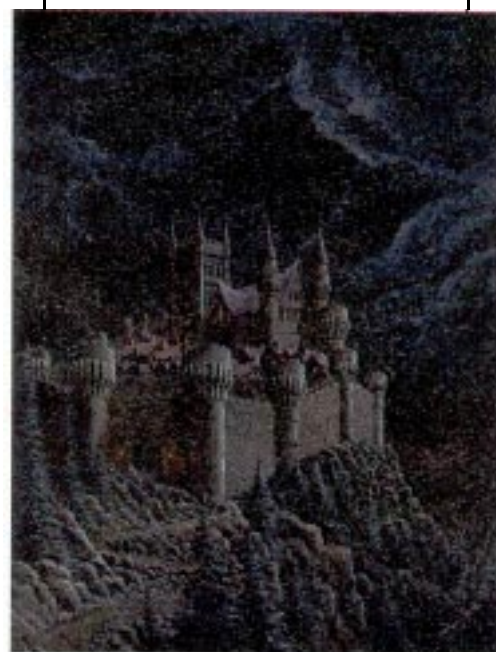
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Second-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to **DRAGON** Magazine, TSR, Inc., 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. USPS 318-790, ISSN 0279-6848.



COVER

This painting was hanging in the art show at the GEN CON® Game Fair last year. As impressive as it is on our cover, it was completely overwhelming hanging on a wall in all of its glory. I was never able to connect with Florida artist Alan Prior during my 4 days in Milwaukee but was fortunate to run across someone who had found one of his business cards. The rest, as they say, is history.



Game Designing 101

Dear Dragon,
My name is Ryan Haskins, and I am a 17-year-old high school student. For the past couple of years I have been designing computer games. After contacting several companies about these games, I was discouraged by their remarks and attitude toward my amateur status. Recently after seeing an article in the December issue of *Inquest* magazine entitled "How to Break Into Gaming," I decided to get back into it. Not computer games, but card games. The latest rage in these games has gotten my attention. Two friends and I, all in high school, have been fans of TSR and *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*® for years, and realized that if we wanted to do this, we had better do it right by contacting the best company in the business.

Ryan Haskins
Lake Mary, FL

Well, Ryan, you've picked the hard topic. It's generally hard for anyone young to get someone to listen to him, but when you consider the demographics of the gaming industry, that doesn't make sense. The best suggestion I can come up with is to address any correspondence to "Game Design Department" at whatever company you're targeting. (We know where you should send first, though, right?) For starters, don't tell people your age. Don't lie; just don't give them a reason right off to disregard your letter. Say you're an amateur game designer who has come up with this spiff game idea, you've playtested it (you have playtested this stuff right?) extensively and it looks like it might fly. Give a very brief synopsis of the game (what it is, basic rules, mechanics, whatever). Ask if anyone would be interested in more information, and ask what hoops you need to jump through. There is probably going to be a disclosure form you'll be asked to fill out, just in case.

If on the other hand, it's a simple fun little game, you could send it here. We're not

averse to putting small games in DRAGON® Magazine. We've done it before, and we'll be doing it again. Make sure, though, that any game article include the TSR disclosure form that accompanies our writer's guidelines.

Some Ideas

Dear Dragon.

My friends and I have been thinking up ideas for *DRAGON* magazine. Why not have a Sage Advice Hotline (Wizards of the Coast has one, why not you guys?) and listings of gamers? For the listings, people can send in their name, age, address, game played, etc.

Oh—how do I submit drawings for *DragonMirth*?

Corey Smith
Montgomery, PA

You have some good ideas in your letter, some of which are—surprise—under development or consideration already.

As for your suggestions for DRAGON Magazine, there are things that need to be taken into account. We can't do a Sage Advice Hotline because we like to be able to research the answer to give the right one. Q&A hotlines tend to promote the quick answer rather than the correct or best thought-out one. Resides: answering questions in the magazine like this allows more people to see the answers, thereby helping more gamers and allowing us to answer the question only once.

Gamer listings would be more trouble than you can imagine. Do you know how many people play these games? It's far easier to get your local gaming store to put up a sign-up bulletin board. A couple of signs posted around your campus could work, too, if you want to start a gaming club at school.

Submitting to DragonMirth is easy: send in your art with a disclosure form to us, attention Larry Smith. That's it. Note that we expect professional material: clean copies for spec or originals on heavy stock.

If you're interested in doing art for DRAGON Magazine, you can write Larry and request artist's guidelines (but don't forget that SASE!).

Thanks. And oops.

Dear Dragon,

It has been a while since you've revised your great magazine, but when I opened issue #222, I found some good changes.

First, I want to congratulate the new editor. I hope he stays longer than his predecessor.

I have some questions: What happened to Yamara and the Forum Section? Did you take them out? Did you notice that you misspelled the name of Paul F. Culotta in the Contents section?

I read in the editorial that Mr. Bryant was going to work for the *DRAGONLANCE*® section. Now that Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman have written the fourth chronicle for *DRAGONLANCE*, is there any plan for a fifth? Are you going to publish, for example, a new boxed set or new accessories for *DRAGONLANCE*?

Luis Ernesto Cordero
P.O. Box 09-01-9145
Guayaquil, Ecuador

Thanks for the good thoughts. I hope to stay here a while, too. Yamara and Forum were not removed so much as displaced; with all the running around taking charge of the magazine, a few things slipped through my fingers. Forum is back in force. Yamara, however, will make its final appearance in DRAGON Magazine next month.

As for misspelling Paul's name, you're right. My apologies, Paul. Mental note to myself don't do the table of contents last or late at night.

*There will be no more Weis and Hickman novels in DRAGONLANCE—or so is my understanding—but there will be a Fifth Age on Krynn. Next August TSR is releasing an entirely new game called DRAGONLANCE: The Fifth Age. It is a new diceless role-playing game with a very clever design; but I can't tell you more about it now or DRAGON **would** need another editor again.*

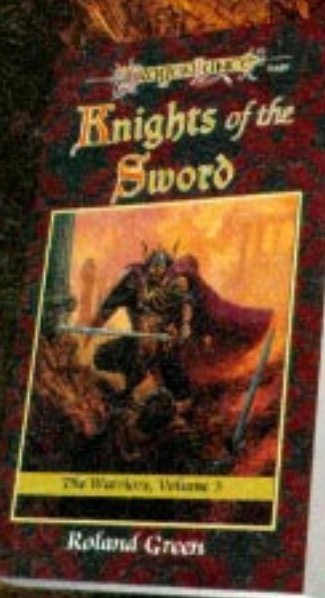


Aak Oops!

Pages 28 and 29 in issue #219 were inadvertently transposed; those of you who couldn't figure out why the charts weren't making sense now know why.



Knights of the Sword



The third book in the DRAGONLANCE® Warriors Series continues the tale of Sir Pirvan the Wayward. A Knight of Solamnia with dubious origins must tap his hidden potential to continue his journey through the ranks of knighthood—and to serve as mentor for another unlikely candidate in Krynn's greatest order of chivalry.

Editorial

Building a Better Dragon®

As 1995 draws to a close, DRAGON® Magazine—the “old” DRAGON—also comes to an end. With the January issue, #225, you will see the “new” DRAGON. The long-promised relaunch is coming.

Actually, an old formula for a successful wedding seems the most appropriate description. “*Something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue.*”

Let’s start with the *something blue*. As of January 1996, DRAGON Magazine will have a cover price of \$4.95. Try as we might to hold the line on price increases, outside factors have forced this change upon us.

In the last year, paper prices have gone up by 80%. Predictions for 1996 forecast an additional increase of, at least, another 20%, and 12% more in 1997. The era of computers and the “paperless office” is upon us. Paper use is skyrocketing and demand from the European and Pacific Rim markets are driving prices to new heights.

Recycle, folks, it’s our only hope. Currently, however, recycled paper is still

much more expensive than virgin paper. Computer use is generating so much waste paper that recyclers are referring to areas like Washington D.C. as “urban forests.” As more paper is recycled, prices will drop. At least, they will drop relative to virgin paper costs. A team effort is the only way to curb upward spiraling prices.

Then there are postal rates. New, recommended rates, due to take effect next spring, will reduce postage for the “big boys,” the large periodical publishers, up to 14%, while penalizing us “little guys” by as much as 17%. Raising our price was an agonizing decision, but an inevitable necessity.

Well, enough singing the blues. The *something borrowed* is you, our readers. Although I said “our” readers, you are only ours as long as we listen to you and provide for your needs. That’s a major reason for the relaunch. You let us know what you wanted in your DRAGON Magazine and we are responding.

Now, as to the *new*, there’s plenty. I’m not going to spoil the surprise with

specifics, but, a brief overview is in order:

1. More color—Full four-color capability, will give you a new, livelier DRAGON without sacrificing readability.
2. More articles—We’re tightening our articles, removing fluff and leaving the meat, thus room for more information.
3. New features—Features intended to be more directly useful at the gaming table.
4. New attitude—Definitely a dragon’s attitude. Feisty and opinionated.

Finally, we come to the *old*. Although we are putting forth a mighty effort to give you a new DRAGON, we cannot ignore your favorites. DragonMirth, Forum, Letters and popular features will remain. Also, the classic style for which DRAGON Magazine is known will not change.

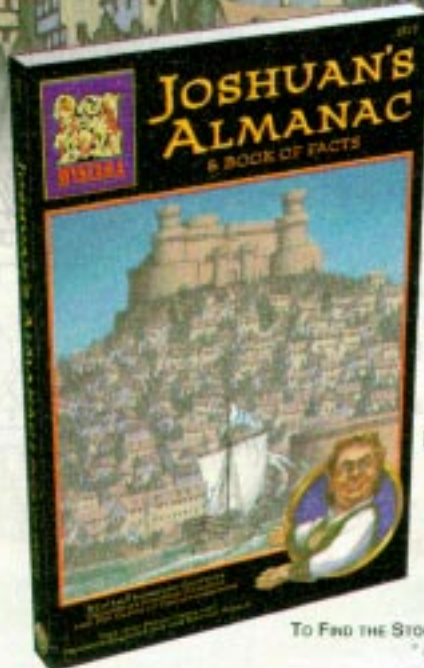
Welcome in the New Year with the new DRAGON, and welcome to the wedding, or, rather a renewal of vows between us and you.



Editor-In-Chief



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FIRST QUEST is the title of TSR, Inc.'s Audio CD Introduction to Role-Playing Game. This series is a feature where veterans of role-playing describe their first experiences in the hobby.

Roll-Playing Vs. Role-Playing

by Steve Jackson

I remember the very first time I encountered D&D®. I'm not sure exactly when it was.. either when I was in college, or just afterward. The DM was my old friend Forrest Johnson, who some of you will remember as the editor of *The Space Gamer* back in the early 1980s.

Forrest had been talking about this great new game he'd learned. It sounded like fun, so one day he ran a couple of us through a wilderness adventure. I don't think he was using all the rules. In fact, I'm not sure he was using anything but the random encounter and treasure tables. There must have been some character generation in there someplace, but I don't recall it. In fact, I don't recall anything about my character. Not that it mattered.

The play was fairly simple. Forrest had the books and the charts. He rolled the dice a lot. Occasionally, someone else got to roll. We'd wander through a forest until we had a random encounter (which, as I remember, was always a group of bandits). We would sneak up on them from upwind. Then our wizard would cast *cloudkill*. After that, we'd loot the bodies and Forrest would roll a *lot* of dice as he totaled up our take. Then we did it again. And again, and again, and again. That must have been one truly bandit-free wilderness by the time we were done.

I do remember asking if there was any chance our prey would fight back. Forrest assured me that there were combat rules, but that they were awfully complicated.

No character development. No role-playing of any kind, in fact. Not a hint of angst. But what do you expect? This was the mid-'70s.

If we ever played a second game, I don't remember it. But it *was* fun, in a perverse sort of way, and it *did* leave me with a vague idea of what D&D was about. Slay the foe, loot the bodies. Cool. I could deal with that.

The next time I played was some years

later. I was freelancing for Metagaming: game development, article editing, game design, advertising, typesetting, a bit of art direction, you name it. Metagaming is ancient history now, but in the late '70s it was a busy little upstart of a company halfway between D&D fandom and "real business." Around 1977 or '78, Robert Tayler started a D&D campaign for the Metagaming crew. We all talked about how it ought to be possible to design a better game, but back then, when we played, we played D&D. And we liked it. Howard Thompson, Ben Ostrander and I were the regular players; others joined the game occasionally. We talked about business and how someday we'd take over the gaming world, and we rolled those polyhedra as we wandered through Robert's dungeon.

Robert was truly a world-class GM. I didn't know it at the time, of course, but as I look back on all the GMs I've ever played with, only Aaron "Play Champions* Till You Drop" Allston put on a better show. And this was pre-1980. Robert hadn't the benefit of years of experience, let alone years of "How to be a better GM, get whiter teeth, and lose 20 pounds" articles. He was just a natural.

You didn't need to know a lot of rules to play with Robert. He took care of all that stuff. But you did need to know about the world in which you were playing.

Specifically, you needed to know what the standard monsters and magic items were like, because Robert loved puzzles and surprises. He was always fair about it, but those magic items were important parts of his puzzles, and ignorance was a capital crime. I remember one tragic death that could have been avoided if the player had remembered exactly how a bag of holding worked.

Robert's dungeon featured a museum, complete with curator, on the first level. Every adventure, the museum would have

different exhibits, clues to what we'd face. Sometimes the curator would give us specific hints or even powerful magic. Like the spray can that turned out to be death on giant scorpions. That one saved our bacon once we'd finally figured it out. Of course, Robert never used the words "spray can" when he described it to us. Good thing the arrow on the top was pointing the right direction when someone finally got desperate enough to push the button.

It was during Robert's campaign that I had the single most exciting bit of character development that I'd ever experienced. My fighter, Ragnar the Impetuous, came out of the dungeon with some gold. Enough to buy chain mail! Now *that* was exciting. No longer was Ragnar taking his life in his hands every time he faced an orc. Now there was a good chance that he'd live through a fair fight.

In the years since then, I've had characters win fortunes, develop super-powers, and conquer empires. But there's never been a vicarious thrill like that of Ragnar getting his chain mail.

Ragnar made it to fourth level before he died, foolishly trying to rescue a friend (one of the disgusting dwarves Howard Thompson loved to play) from the mind-controlling clutches of an ogre mage. The dwarf, obedient to his evil master, skewered Ragnar with a crossbow bolt. Robert just shook his head. "You should have known you couldn't rescue him without magic." True. I knew that. Even Ragnar knew that. But he didn't care. He was going to die trying. He did, too.

It was a great campaign. Hmmm... You know, Robert's still in town. I wonder whether he's running any games these days.

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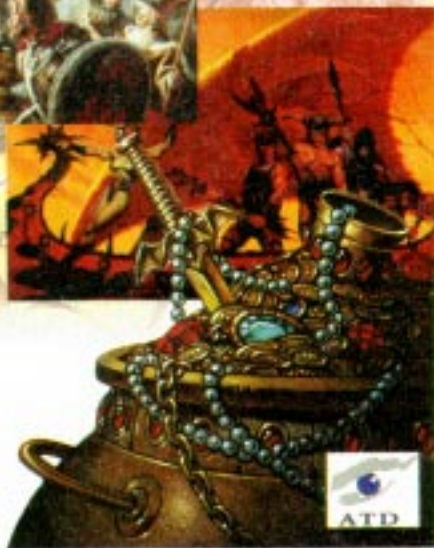
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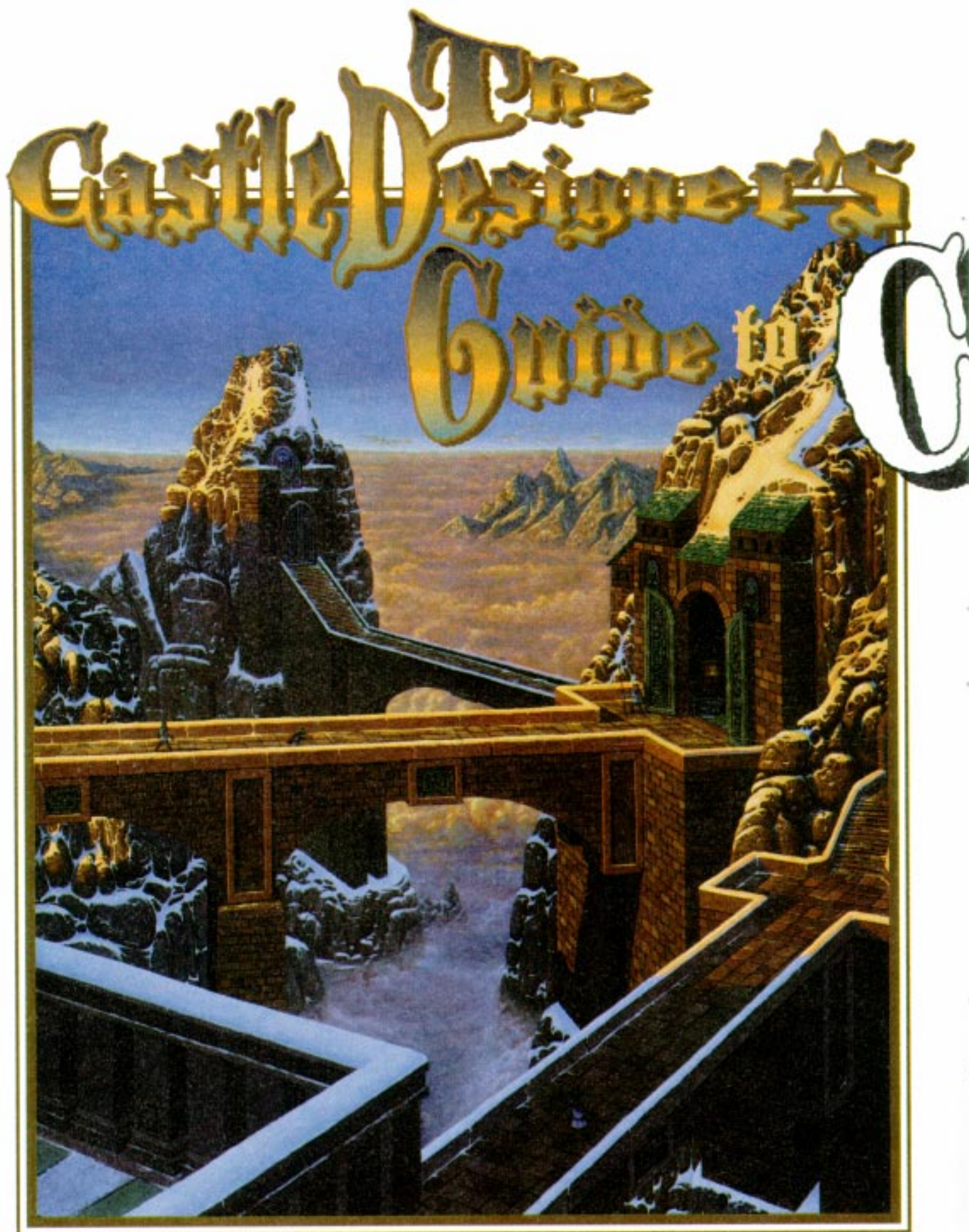
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Fortifying Your Citadel Against The Unexpected

by Jeffrey Allen Paul

Artwork by David Horne

Dealing with Magic and the Supernatural

Castles are as integral to the AD&D® game as the wyrms that buzz their battlements and the dungeons that lie deep beneath their stony keeps. Castles are *sancti sanctora* for the powers who move and shake our imaginary worlds, and they often serve as focal points for an entire campaign. Gamers rely on these buildings to safeguard their favorite nobles and PC's from the forces and terrors that seek to depose them. But how many castles without magical gimmickry are really secure enough?

This exposes a fundamental problem with castles in an AD&D setting. When gamers adopt castles into their campaigns, they are asking their fortresses to defend against far more than real castles were ever equipped to handle: medieval architects did not have dragons, invisible fighters, or fireballs in mind when they designed their defenses. Witness the case of Hector, the hapless DM:

Newly outfitted with the loot from their last adventure, the Stirling Party set out against the castle of the evil Baron Boneleaux. The assault has been meticulously prepared by Hector to be a very tough adventure. The

DM's upper lip curls in an expectant leer as he describes Stirling's final approach to the Baron's gray, crenellated abode. But, hold on, what's that? In a quick two-pronged attack, half of the party charges the front gate and fireball two towertops full of guards, stone shape an arrowslit into a service entrance, jump to the top of the gatehouse, and open the doors for their retainers, while their companions seep gaseously into the treasury, steal the best loot, stamp out some feeble resistance, and raise their ensign on the roof of the keep, all before the evil baron can finish his breakfast or poor Hector can close his mouth. Imagine what would have happened if the party had access to a scroll of cloudkill or a couple of griffons.

Hector's case illustrates three main castle weaknesses in AD&D. First, low-level magic can subvert a castle's defenses in ways a medieval architect never dreamed. Second, a party of supernaturally heroic characters unafraid of the puny weaponry of a normal castle guard will not be held at bay by standard high walls, wooden doors, or crossbow bolts. Finally, the all-too-common scenario of air-based (in this

case *gaseous*) commandos means that the castle's flat, open towertops and sprawling, concentric walls often prove more of a liability than a defense.

Despite their shortcomings, castles are not going to disappear from our campaign worlds any time soon, nor do we want them to. Castles are too close to the beating heart of fantasy role-playing; they can be foreboding, romantic, and adventurous all at the same time, and no nobleman worth his coat of arms would settle for anything less. A fantasy castle doesn't need to be defended by outrageous creatures or magic to retain an awe-striking eminence in your campaigns, however. It just needs a little help.

With this in mind, here are some suggestions for "beefing up" an AD&D castle's defenses against the most common fantasy attacks. The following countermeasures are grouped into three sections: measures against magic spells, measures against supernatural attackers, and measures against aerial attacks. Many suggestions are simple, showing how "homespun" wisdom can cope with destructive magic.

Measures Against Magical Spells

If earth- and stone-affecting spells were the only magic a fantasy castle commander had to cope with, he could take a lot more coffee breaks. Most spells of this type are Greek to any mage of less than 9th level, so are correspondingly uncommon; and all of them have a limited range and area of effect. Unfortunately for our heroic commanders, even the simplest spells and spell effects can wreak havoc upon a castle's defences.

Wet Hides and Iron Plates

Soaked animal hides were regularly used in medieval sieges to protect wooden structures from fire. They appear here as a reminder that wooden doors, hoardings, and artillery need not be as vulnerable to PCs' fiery antics as they seem.

Consider a wet cowhide hung over a wooden door or palisade to be a sort of anti-fire armour. A *burning hands* or low-level *fireball* might not destroy a wooden object unless the leather covering first fails its saving throw vs. fire or magical fire, as appropriate. Well-watered hides could receive a bonus of up to +4 the first time they are attacked.

The ancient Greeks took fire protection one step further, facing their wooden siege towers and artillery platforms with iron plating. Structures protected in this way are almost impervious to fire unless the iron plates can be somehow removed.

Arrow Loop Shutters

These simple devices are especially aimed at lessening the threat from that most destructive of castle wrecking spells, the *fireball*. One party's favorite tactic was to rush up beside an arrow loop, insert a wand of fireballs and *boom!*—more often than not, an entire level of tower guards was instantly fried. Fitting a simple (preferably "leaded," q.v.) shutter on your arrow slits gives guards the fighting chance they deserve.

In a similar vein, a shutter can prevent most other attack spells, including *stinking cloud*, *lightning bolt*, etc.

Felt and Fur

PCs may have access to a *potion of gaseous form*, the spell *wraithform*, or the magic to command insubstantial minions such as shadows to do their bidding. How can a stronghold commander defend against the air itself? A vaporous PC or minion can enter a stronghold undetected, and while there has a free reign to carry out whatever treachery he may devise.

Landowners grow paranoid at the thought of such an unstoppable attack. *Gaseous* visitations can be curtailed simply by placing glass in some of a stronghold's portals, but this measure won't work for any portals that must remain unobstructed for use as arrowslits.

As medieval people knew, fur and humble felt together create a virtually airtight seal. Thus a door frame, including the floor, or an arrow loop shutter, might be lined with short fur and the door-edge lined with felt, to the detriment of free-spirited gaseous infiltrators everywhere.

Frequent Partitions

Even arrow loop shutters aren't foolproof. Frequent partitions are damage control devices that minimize the destruction wrought by *fireballs*, gas, and all sorts of area-affecting commonly employed magic. With the addition of frequent partitions, a spell that might have taken out 10 men inside an open section of castle wall or room might now immobilize only two or three. The partitions are essentially sections of wall with doors that are closed only when the threat of magical attack occurs. They can be located along any passage or room in the castle and are made of wood, iron-faced wood, or stone. Often they are pierced with small covered hatches to allow the defenders to coordinate their efforts. Think of frequent partitions as a kind of water-tight compartmentalization for castles.

Canine Guards

Dogs have been residents of every stronghold since the time of Gilgamesh, but they have seldom been employed as actual fortress guards. The reasons for this probably aren't hard to guess: they have trouble seeing over the battlements for one, and they also have a tendency to bark at phantom intruders. The latter characteristic might have disqualified canines from historical guard duty, but it makes them all the more valuable in AD&D where, as often as not, the intruders are phantoms.

It is still advisable that dogs be accompanied by human guards who can quickly judge for themselves whether their partners are barking at a moth or a potential threat. *Invisible*, *gaseous*, *silent*, and similar creatures that can evade a human watch's senses might be easily detected by his more acute canine companion.

Court Spotter

One of the more annoying (and potentially deadly) challenges faced by the defenders of a fantasy castle is the prospect of an *invisible* attacker. A lone spellcaster with access to the spells *fly* and *improved invisibility* can quickly put an end to a castle's active resistance. Fortunately, there are many creatures in fantasy nature whose senses are not fooled by this magical stunt. To brownies, imps, pixies, leprechauns, etc., an *invisible* spellcaster is no unstoppable menace, but a very exposed (albeit still powerful) target.

To benefit from the natural abilities of such creatures, many lords have created the office of "court spotter." Sometimes combined with the office of court jester

(depending upon the race of the spotter,) these spotters generally live a life of luxury and honor. During a battle they become assets of the first rank, for they reveal the whereabouts of any would-be commandos. Armed with this intelligence, the commander can effectively counteract an otherwise unstoppable enemy.

Scrolls

The problem with using priests and mages, from a castle defender's point of view, is their very limited natural spell-casting ability. A large battle can drain them of the most useful magic very quickly. One accepted, yet often neglected, way around this is the casting of spells from a magical scroll. It seems logical then, if not quite fair, for any prudent lord with to increase his own magic supply by "stockpiling" scrolls between battles.

According to the rulebooks there is no limit to the number of scrolls a lord may own as long as he can pay for them and get someone to scribe them for him. A well-balanced DM, however, will want to find some practical limit to the number of scrolls owned by a given lord. It does follow that more powerful and more ancient lordships will have had plenty of time (at least since the last big battle) to hoard their favorite spells. *Dispel magic* is infinitely useful for deflating *enlarged*, *flying*, *invisible*, *gaseous*, and otherwise enhanced enemies. The new spell *invisibility purge* is similarly very helpful in some situations. Lords with a more offensive flair might stockpile *ice storms*, *magic missiles*, and other nastiness for use by their court wizards.

Leaded Mortar

This innovation, perhaps the most revolutionary and useful anti-magical defense suggested here, was invented a thousand years ago by the ingenious Paranomian architects. It is well known that a little bit of lead goes a long way to prevent scrying, *dimension doors*, and many other attempts at wall subversion. Leaded mortar effectively places the equivalent thickness of 2"-5" of lead inside a castle wall without compromising its strength, by the following method:

A cross section of a castle wall can be likened to a sandwich stood on edge. The outside layers (the bread) are usually of cut mortared stones, while the inside is filled with a "rubble" of irregular stones and mortar. It is into the "rubble" mortar that leaded mortar masons pour their stuff, which is a mixture of a special mortar and lead.

Of course, the elite clique of craftsmen who know the composition of leaded mortar will jealously guard their secret formula, and "leading" one's castle is sure to cost an exorbitant amount of money. Others may try to secure their strongholds by placing sheets of lead inside their walls, but this may prove impractical and sub-

ject to sabotage. (Leaded bricks would be a better alternative; see below.)

Once lead mortar is in place in a castle or portion thereof, it is maintenance-free and provides unfailing proof against all sorts of nasty magic. Therein lies its appeal, and the rationale behind its burdensome price tag. *Note:* this stuff can be *very* potent if the DM desires; for example, even an earth elemental that has battered its way through a castle wall might move between a standing section and its summoner once it's inside, thus cancelling control and causing it to turn on its summoner.

Leaded Bricks

Leaded bricks are formed of a secret clay and lead admixture. These are not very useful in the exterior or supporting walls of a castle which must bear great weight or the brunt of an artillery assault, but they are perfect if one wishes to build an interior wall impervious to scrying, *teleportation*, or other magical subversion. Lords who cannot afford leaded mortar will certainly wish to safeguard their personal chambers with leaded bricks.

Leaded Slits and Portals

In our introductory example, the Stirling Party used the 3rd-level priest's spell *stone shape* to mold an arrow loop into a tunnel through the curtain wall. The thin stone around an arrow loop makes it a natural place for magical subversion to be attempted, just like the small size of castle portals makes them natural targets for *reduce* and *warp wood* spells. If the DM so rules, all of these common magical tricks can be hindered by the placement of a thin layer of lead around the doors, shutters, and lining the arrow loops of a castle.

Mage Shot

We've all heard the one about the best defense being a good offense. The idea behind mage shot is to turn ballistae and catapults into area-affecting artillery. Instead of the standard stone or bolt, defenders load cannister shot (a missile of little stones or bullets wrapped in leather). The missiles scatter in flight, to the effect of saturating a cone of 15' diameter for every 50' to a maximum effective range of 200', with tiny, projectiles that individually cause little damage, but are much to the detriment of creatures flying or trying to cast spells in the area. The space covered by these missiles might negate penalties for shooting at flying targets and perhaps even give a bonus of up to +4 for artillery firing at stationary targets. Besides wrecking spells and flight, mage shot is especially effective against invisible creatures whose general location is often known but who are hard to hit with direct fire. Because mage shot saturates an area with missiles, the standard -4 penalty to hit invisible creatures is reduced according to range and size of the cone, although

THACO is otherwise calculated as per a normal ballista shot.

Suggested to hit *invisible* creatures penalty and damage is: 0'-50', -3, 3-12 hp; 51'-100', -2, 2-5 hp; 101'-150', -1, 1-2 hp; 151'-200', no penalty, 1 hp.

Note: To the best of my knowledge, this idea might not be scientifically workable, but it makes a lot of sense and is an effective weapon besides. As always, discretion is left to individual DMs. This suggestion is also effective against supernatural and aerial attacks, as discussed below.

Dispel Magic Portals

The creation of *dispel magic* portals—perhaps as useful as the famed leaded mortar—is nothing short of a revolution in fortification. Combining *dispel magic* and *permanency* affects a portal of not greater than 24 square feet. Any effective magic that goes or is brought through the portal is subject to the effects of a *dispel magic* spell at the level of the caster who cast the original spells.

Up to three “layers” of this defensive measure may be cast on the same portal, causing multiple checks to be made. Of course, this can affect the lord's and courtier's items and cause problems with potion transportation (potions are treated as 5th-level magic as per the *Player's Handbook*), but these inconveniences are minor when compared with the potential benefits. A single portal (which one is known only to the castle lord) may be left undefended in this way to allow his magic to pass unharmed.

Any attempts by infiltrators to enter warded areas of the castle *invisible*, *reduced*, *polymorphed*, *gaseous*, or the like, may be foiled. A similar combination of the clerical spell *protection from evil* and *permanency* produces portals through which summoned creatures may not pass.

The most arcane and powerful lords live in towers warded with *anti-magic* portals, which, in theory, would unfailingly prevent any magical or summoned effects from entering.

Measures Against Supernatural Abilities

One common, but often unrecognized, threat to an AD&D castle is the “juggernaut factor.”

Many beings can dispatch a dozen or so common swordsmen without getting a scratch. Castle designers in the middle ages could count on crossbowmen behind arrowslits to drive attackers from the walls, and could use walls to channel and expose enemy infiltrators to the deadly attacks of several defenders at once; but heroic fighters and powerful monsters scoff at crossbow bolts and count the usual castle guards at nothing. How can a castellan hope to keep a troop of powerful creatures or characters who are bent on

really ruining his evening *outside* the walls where they belong? What can a defending lord do when several multi-Hit Die creatures decide to storm his fortress?

In a toe-to-toe struggle, his men are next to useless, but he has to stop the invaders somewhere. Let us look at the problem safeguarding the castle against supernatural beings (including quasi-magical thieves).

Multi-Arrow ballistae

Though artillery was not terribly common on medieval towertops, the Greeks and Romans designed towertops and fenestration to accommodate effective ballistae, catapults, and other siege engines. Multi-arrow ballistae make an ideal basis for any anti-adventurer arsenal.

Ordinary castle guards are little more than catapult fodder when faced by well-equipped, high-level adventurers. Given the right tools, however, any man-at-arms can do his job. Multi-arrow ballistae launch all of their large arrows (usually three) along a parallel path. Depending upon DM deviousness, multi-arrow ballistae could give low-level guards the firepower they need to counter a powerful but exposed assault.

Imagine a fighter's unpleasant surprise as he is slammed backward by the force of two very heavy (2d6) ballista arrows.

A separate attack roll should be made for each bolt, as they will not fly completely true or necessarily all strike the same target, although a strength bonus equivalent to a hill giant's boulder (+4, +7) could be applied to each missile to simulate the power of the weapon.

Glass-Capped Battlements

Pointed stones were fitted to the tops of the crenels on some medieval battlements as decorations. Defenders who must cope with the magical and semi-magical climbing abilities of AD&D game's mages and thieves might wish to employ a nastier alternative: setting shards of broken glass or pottery into the masonry along the *sides* of their battlements. This medieval alternative to barbed wire may render grappling hooks useless, and definitely makes climbing parapets tricky business indeed for *spider-climbing* mages and scaling thieves (who may lose concentration and fall.)

Lords might employ iron spikes and scraps of metal to the same effect. Depending on the ferocity of the glass or iron impedimenta, a thief who tries to scale encrusted battlements should be forced to make a climb walls check at -30% to -50% or suffer 1-4 hp damage and fall. *Spider climbers* must make a single saving throw vs. paralyzation or suffer 2-5 (2-7 for iron spikes) points of damage per 4' of warded surface scaled.

Iron Drop-Doors

When a powerful foe infiltrates your cas-

tle, seal him off and call for reinforcements. Iron drop-doors provide a defending force that is out-leveled and out-magicked vital time to regroup, and they can greatly hinder intruders. These heavy devices consist of a sheet of iron or iron-faced wood fitted portcullis-style into a passage or doorway ceiling. Normally the door slabs are held out of the way by iron crossbars. When needed, a lever is pulled, and down they fall, cutting access from overrun areas of a stronghold. If they fall into a shallow (1") groove in the floor, they are virtually impossible to move during the chaos of an attack.

Iron drop-doors may be placed anywhere in a castle, but they are at their most useful inside the top level of a tower, where they can help defend against aerial attack (q.v.). An enclosed stone staircase is built to access the tower roof in place of the usual hatch, and the bottom doorway to the staircase provides a fine place for a drop door. If things on the roof get too heated, soldiers may prevent enemies from entering their tower by simply pulling a lever. (Don't forget to "lead-line" your doors.)

Sealing Blocks

These are a feature of powerful dwarven strongholds (such as the gates of Pax Tharkas on Krynn) and are essentially giant, stone versions of the iron drop-

doors mentioned above. Sealing stones are built to keep enemies from passing through a certain corridor by turning it into an unbreathable wall, so they are only used as a last resort. The room required for placement of a sealing stone is considerable. To block a 5' wide, 7' high corridor, a stone of at least 5' x 7' x 4' thick must be suspended in an alcove in the corridor ceiling by chains of monstrous thickness. Space must also be left above the alcove for the suspension mechanisms.

The stone itself is often faced with solid stone caps followed by a layer of lead or lead mortar (q.v.) to make them proof against any of the standard stone bypassing spells.

Most sealing blocks drop from the ceiling as described above, but an extremely clever architect can create a sealing block that slides sideways across a corridor.

The obvious problem with these devices is their indestructibility. They are one-shot devices, their suspension mechanisms being ruined in the sudden release of tension at their fall. Whoever holds the castle when the dust of battle has settled has quite a task ahead of them if they ever wish to see the view from the top of their keep.

Glyph Passages

The 3rd-level priest/4th-level mage spell *glyph of warding* is invaluable to castle

commanders. Lords recognize the value of this spell and commonly use it to ward the inner recesses of their strongholds; but a given stronghold only has so many places where placement of a *glyph* is practical.

One may wish to create a series of doors (a reasonable number would be three to six) leading to a given room or passage, each of which may be warded with a *glyph*. (This is most practical in places used only infrequently, such as a main treasury or a secret escape passage, and where there is a long stretch of hallway available for placement of the doors.) Even the most foolhardy adventurer becomes discouraged by the fourth or fifth door that explodes in his face. Lords who use the passageway on occasional business can set the wards to disregard creatures of their own alignment or species as per the *PHB*.

Glyph passages are great ways to safeguard escape tunnels under a castle.

Concentration Room

The concentration room gives low-level and outnumbered castle guards a position from which to defend against invaders. In this room every possible advantage belongs to the defender.

This is a circular or polygonal room at the end of a fortified entryway. The room is lined with arrowslits. From the enemy's perspective it looks like a room in a round castle tower, except that the arrowslits are facing *inward*, toward would-be intruders. The other essential features of this room are one or two false doors located on the walls, and a secret door. In times of peace, the secret door is left open to allow normal access.

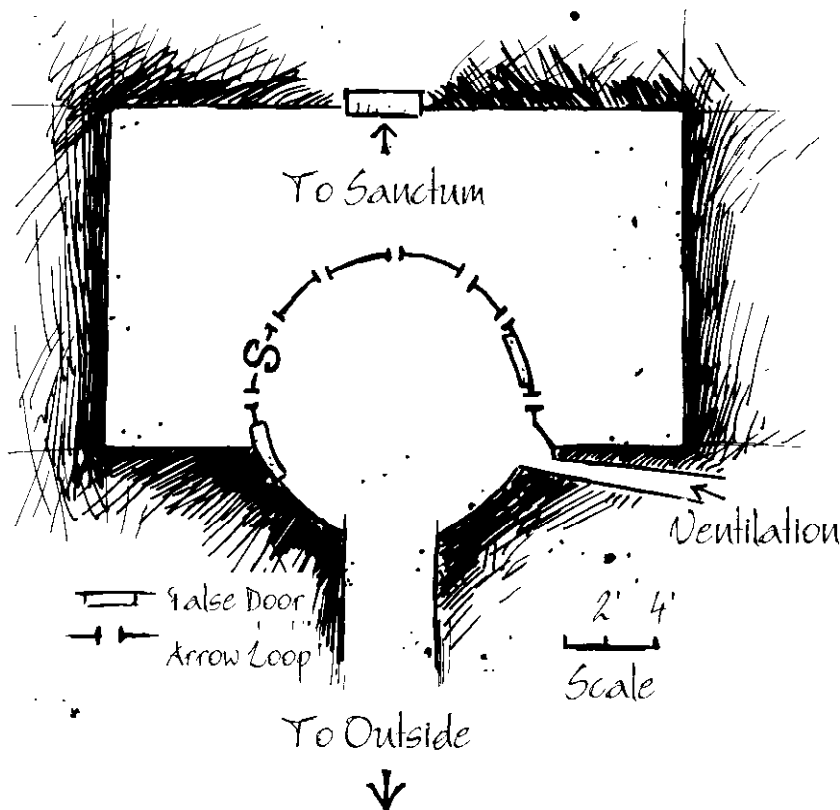
Behind the arrowslits is a guardroom garrisoned by crack crossbowmen and spearmen who fire and stab mercilessly at intruders at point blank range. Well-prepared lords keep a stock of Greek fire and oil on hand to set the room ablaze. The best designs incorporate arrow loop shutters, felt and fur, and frequent partitions (q.q.v.) to thwart magical attacks. Of course, any number of pits, portcullises, murder holes, and other nasty devices can and should be added here, as this is where a garrison will want to make its last stand.

Wizard Stake

Though most civilized folk frown upon poison, tucked away in a corner or locked room in some castle chambers is a long thin barrel with a stake protruding from the top (looking rather like an emaciated butter churn). Soldiers of the tower are to pluck the stake from the barrel *only* if they face "nightmarish odds."

A wizard stake is a javelin whose head is stored in a small pot of fast-acting poison. The spear head makes an airtight lid for the poison pot, allowing the deadly liquid to stay potent for some time.

Figure 1: Concentration Room



Measures Against Aerial Assault

A sad consequence of building strongholds with no provision against aerial assault is that castles as we know them have concentric rings of isolated, flat topped towers. These are useless for anti-aerial fortresses. If medieval people at some point had suddenly been faced with the possibility of airborne attack, they no doubt they would have taken precautions similar to those suggested below.

Keep-Centric Design

Many medieval cast consisted of a straggling, unkempt series of outlying earthworks, walls, and towers which sprawled all over several acres of land and were physically unconnected to any central building. In some castles there *was* no central building *per se*, and a ring of towers joined by curtain walls served in its stead.

Both of these designs are very vulnerable to airborne attackers. In the first case, a castellan must sprinkle his men around the outlying walls and towers where they can be taken, after which these areas provide perfect cover and hiding spots for enemy troops. No castle commander can defend such a vast area during an aerial assault, as remote ramparts and towers succumb one by one to swarming enemies.

In a tower-ring design, defenders have literally nowhere to run when, say, a gaggle of harpies decides to swoop in for a visit. With little shelter and no central haven to retreat toward, each tower is left to defend itself. (Certainly not a morale-boosting arrangement.)

A castle commander who is faced by aerial invaders is in a much better position if he can keep most of his men in a centralized location, where they can fight as a strong and unified force and have a roof over their heads and a wall to lean against if the going gets tough. The commander will also want to see most of his fortress at once without concerning himself with what may be happening in some tower 200 yards away.

A strong, keep-centric design has a few thick supporting towers linked by in-wall passageways (all carefully guarded and equipped with drop doors or sealing stones, [q.q.v.]) and outer bailey walls built to be abandoned in the event of aerial attack. Classic Scottish castles are some good examples of this type. When under attack from every side, the presence of a strong central bastion to steady the defenders can often turn the tide of battle.

Reinforced Towntop Doors

Only the stupidest invaders enter through the front door—especially if it is open. While medieval architects enjoyed the luxury of leaving their towttop entrances open to the air, fantasy architects have to cope with the fact that their tower-top doors are almost as vulnerable as their

front doors. An economical solution would be to reinforce the hatches by forging them of iron and securing them with bars. This might just give guards the time they need to call in reinforcements and prepare themselves for aerial attack.

Elevated Ballistae

Multi-arrow or mage-shooting (q.q.v.) ballistae make excellent anti-aerial assault weapons when provided with an elevating and swiveling mount, especially when provided with some cover. (See improved tower tops, below.)

Improved Towntops

This countermeasure might prove a bit radical for a few castle purists, but some kind of towttop improvement is essential if a castle commander wants to get serious about anti-aerial defense. Troops on a flat, open towttop (wonderful targets for breath weapons and *fireballs*) might as well be standing in the middle of a field during an aerial attack. Troops who manage to escape down into the tower have little choice but to hunker down with no effective offense, and are little more than prisoners in their own castle.

The obvious place for a castle garrison to fend off airborne attackers is from the towttops. A new towttop structure must provide ample cover for soldiers for attacks from any direction while allowing them to fight back effectively, and be architecturally sound while remaining aesthetically pleasing with regards to overall castle design.

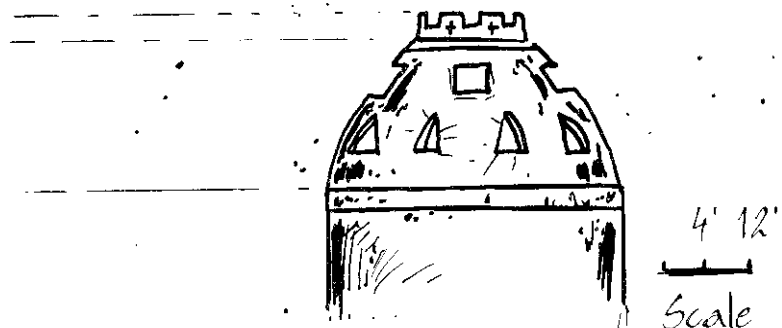
In smaller towers, where placement of more than one ballista is impractical, a stone dome-top can be suggested. These tops are vaguely reminiscent of Henry VIII's 16th century shore-fort architecture, and they are pierced by a number of small (2' x 3') arched windows. The windows occur in two rows around the sides, where the first row provide a view of the

surrounding land, and the second row opens just above head height to provide a view of the sky. The windows are large and frequent enough for archers to aim and shoot at a flying target, while remaining small and few enough to provide a large degree of cover. The Romans effectively fired ballistae at ground targets from similar portals. (Firing at aerial targets through such a portal might, at the DM's discretion, incur a -2 penalty to hit, but remember that mage shot [q.v.] can negate this disadvantage.)

The dome-top need not be very thick because its angle will serve to deflect dropped or ground-based missiles. Of course, the windows should have strong shutters (preferably leaded [q.v.]) to protect against magical attack and enemies seeking entrance. The designs leave no battlements outside the main level for landing on. The top of the dome can be flattened and crenellated to provide a small watch tower above this room. If the dome-top is infiltrated, the staircase into the tower can be fitted with an iron drop door (q.v.).

Larger tower and citadel roofs present a bit more of a problem if they are to do all of the above as well as provide a platform for multi-arrow ballistae (q.v.) and/or torsion catapults. Much more open space is required here than is provided by a dome-top tower. This problem can be solved by building a cross-shaped wall dividing the old flat towttop into four equal areas, and enclosing each quadrant with an overarching roof. Each quadrant will be a rounded cave-like area, looking much like a modern amphitheater, leaving enough room and arc to fire a catapult. The roof is shaped so as to provide direct overhead coverage but with plenty of room for a ballista to be fired with up to 50° elevation. The center area where the four quadrants meet is enclosed to contain a small circular room and staircase into the tower (or

Figure 2: Dome-top Tower
Side View



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upward into a complete dome-topped tower above.) The quadrant walls need not be extended to the battlements, so an unbroken circuit may run round the outside of the tower. Small windows can be created in each quadrant wall to further communication between the quadrants during battle, or iron-faced doors may pierce each quadrant wall to facilitate the movement of ballistas.

This design affords towertop defenders cover from above and on three sides at all times, while allowing them freedom to fire their artillery in a wide arc. Division of the

towertop into quadrants *does* hinder visibility on the main level, but provides insurance that at any given time only one-fourth of the towertop is vulnerable from a single attack. Flying creatures attacking one quadrant must expose their flank and rear to another quadrant while they reposition themselves.

An additional dome-top above the quadrant roof forces attackers to deal with fire from more than one level. This design provides the cover, firepower, and concentration of forces that make a castle tower defensible. □

Figure 3: Quadrant-top Tower
Main Level Floorplan

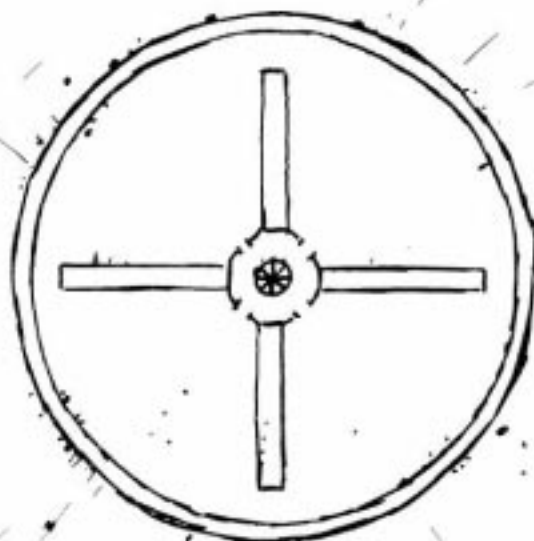
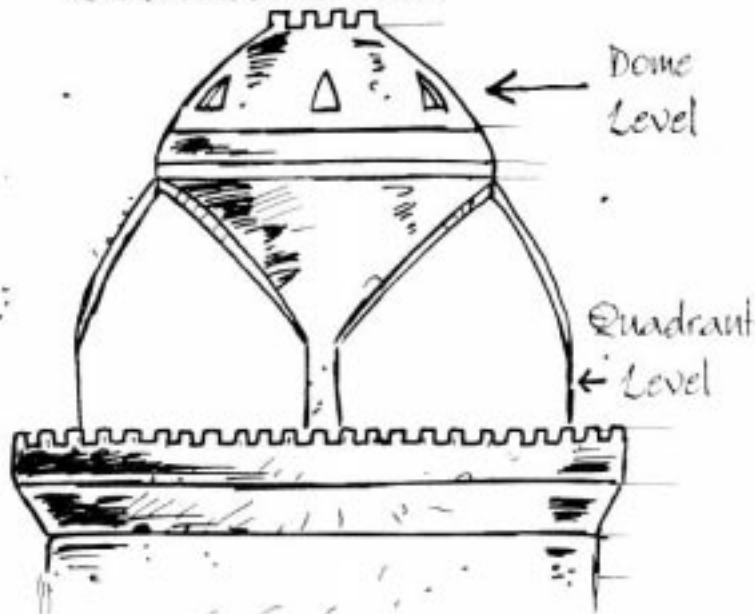


Figure 4: Side View of
Quadrant/Dome Tower





A Simple Random Generator for Enhancing Your Campaign

by Steve Miller

Artwork by Brian Durfee

Elven Cities & Settlements

The Complete Book of Elves provided useful suggestions for how the basic subraces of elves might be approached when a DM or player is considering what an elven city is like. It divided elves along racial lines: gray elves live in mighty fortified stone cities; high elves live in elegant tree houses; and sylvan elves lead nomadic existences, only occasionally building semi-permanent structures.

One would think that elves, much like humans, have different architecture depending on their culture, circumstances, and the world in which they exist. The various TSR settings seem to bear this out. For example, two of the elven nations in the *DRAGONLANCE*® setting build impressive walled cities of airy courtyards and mighty stone palaces with spires that twist into the sky, with the wild forests around them being one of the primary defenses of the cities. The third culture, on the other hand, leads a more nomadic existence, moving from area to area of the island upon which they dwell as dictated by the seasons. By contrast, the elven nations detailed in the *WORLD OF GREYHAWK*® and *FORGOTTEN REALMS*® settings almost universally live in fixed settlements that blend with the environment around them—most frequently magically shaped trees—so that the elven homes are literally living, growing things.

This article provides DMs with a ready-made elven city that both uses and breaks the conventions that have come to be considered “traditional” in AD&D®. It also provides tables that can be used to randomly generate an elven city or settlement. (These tables can, of course, also be used as a checklist by the DM who has an elven city in mind, but who wants to make sure he has everything covered.)

The City of Arimar

Arimar is isolated from human communities because it is located deep within a high plateau, shared with goblins, gnolls, and nature spirits such as dryads, nymphs, sylphs, sandlings, and neriads. The Arimarians have generally friendly relations with the humanoids, and live in perfect harmony with the nature spirits. Occasionally, the goblins and gnolls will get tired of raiding each other, and will turn toward Arimar. Then they are reminded *why* they stick to raiding each other. Well-traveled Arimarians have met humans, and consider them a few steps above the goblins, but saw little of worth in opening relations with peoples so far removed. To most Arimarian elves, humans are just another humanoid race with whom they share the world, a race that is neither friend nor foe.

To the north of Arimar, the land rises into rocky foothills where the elves operate a heavily guarded mithril mine. To the west and south are marshes claimed by the gnolls and goblins. A river winds through the forest, terminating in what the elves consider the heart of Arimar, the center of the ancient, virgin forest in which their city is built.

Arimar is a city of 3,500 inhabitants, and is built over an area of four square miles. Should humans ever discover the city, it is very likely that they will merely observe part of the sprawling settlement and view it as a small elven community, or they will come upon several of them and conclude that it is cluster of villages isolated from each other, despite the fact they may only be a mile or two apart. To the elves, however, Arimar is about as compact and crowded as necessity dictates and they can tolerate and still maintain their sanity.

At the heart of Arimar is the Grove. This park-like area holds both the seat of the city's government, the High Council, and the forges and smithies where master-craftsmen shape mithril into elven chain mail and potent weapons. Both are housed in an elaborate stone building constructed to resemble an immense, natural boulder. In addition, the Grove is home to several beings who are tightly tied to the natural world. There is a pond

which serves as the home for a nymph. A sylph lives high in the top of an ancient tree to which a dryad has bound herself. An area of open sand is the dwelling place of a sandling. The ever-burning forges of the community is home to a fire mephit. The elves of Arimar surround their site of government with these other beings because they believe they sprang from a union of the four elements, earth, wind, fire, and air. They do not believe they were created by gods, although they can hardly deny the existence of such beings, but instead believe they embody the best of what the natural world offers.

The High Council

The High Council is a semi-democratic body. Those who sit on it must be residents of Arimar for at least 75 summers. When a council member steps down, he must nominate a successor, and this successor must be accepted by a majority of the council before taking the seat. Any citizen of Arimar may call a council member's right to sit on the council into question, and 100 or more citizens may even nominate an individual to sit on the council. Of course, they must also point to the council member they want their nominee to replace. In both cases of citizen involvement, the council accepts or rejects their motion, but the councilors are known to adhere to the will of the citizens in most cases.

There are four seated members of the council, one for each of the elements. A fifth member heads the council, and he is always chosen by the citizens of Arimar at elections that are held once every decade. Generally, the head of the council is a hunter or warrior who has performed some invaluable service for the community and has made himself a hero to the people. The elves have very long memories, so unless a deed is truly remarkable, or the head of the council steps down voluntarily (which many do, as adventurers often find that life as a politician does not agree with them), the head of the council generally rules for life.

The High Council is responsible for establishing law in the city, and it maintains a small welfare program for children who have been orphaned.

The Defenses of Arimar

The elves of Arimar co-exist relatively peacefully with the gnolls who dwell in a nearby marsh, so the need for a standing army does not exist. All adults (those over the age of 40), however, are required by law to be able to use a bow, as each adult must serve as a hunter for the community for one month out of every year.

Additionally, in time of dire threats, it is these archers who are called upon to defend the city. This last occurred when a green dragon attempted to establish a lair and dominance over the area. The dragon was so obnoxious about it that it managed

to bring the gnolls and elves from existing in a state of uneasy peace to a united front as allies. Once the dragon was driven off, the two races drifted from each other again.

The Citizens of Arimar

Arimar consists primarily of single family dwellings constructed around the base of trees, with additional levels built in the crown of the tree. The rooms on the ground are where Arimarians receive guests, conduct business, and generally interact with those who are not family members. These structures are generally made from stone, with floors made of packed earth. Some feature small springs. Again, the elves are reminding themselves from whence they sprang. The structures built in the tree are intended strictly for the family, and as the tree grows, the ladders leading to these other levels are extended. How extensive these are is considered a sign of wealth among Arimarians, but it is considered the ultimate shame to overbuild a tree to the point of either killing it or breaking it.

As young elves leave home to establish a household of their own, they choose a tree close to the home of a close relative and connect the upper levels of their home to the upper levels of the relatives dwelling with rope bridges. Because of this tradition, the city has more or less become divided into districts dominated by the five clans that form the majority population of the city. (Clan lineage is determined by the female's background, and it is not uncommon for Arimarian women to go on adventures in search of a suitable husband in the lands beyond Arimar.) Since the clans tend to have crafts they specialize in, the city is also divided into various trade districts, although there is no central marketplace *per se*; natives know where to go to get what wares, and will happily direct visitors to the correct locations.

Random Elven City Generation Tables

Elf type

- 1-3 High elf
- 4 Gray elf
- 5-6 Sylvan elf

Settlement Size (divide results by 10 if Elf Type was "Sylvan Elf")

- 1 10-60
- 2-3 70-200
- 4 300-1,000
- 5 1,100-5,000
- 6 5,100-10,000

Dominant Architectural Feature

- 1-2 Homes built in trees
- 3 Stone buildings
- 4 Temporary dwellings, except for temples and government halls
- 5-6 Homes built in trees and under-

ground, blending perfectly with natural environment

Government Type

- 1-3 Hereditary monarchy
- 4 Hagiarchy
- 5 Democracy
- 6 No set government, except in times of crises; then a "king" is appointed by elves of hereditary noble status; the "king" rules until the crisis has past

Seat of Government

- 1-2 Central palace or council hall
- 3-5 An open grove somewhere within the city's territory
- 6 No set place for government to meet.

Army

- 1-2 Standing army.
- 3-5 Volunteer army, assembled only in times of crisis.
- 6 Hunters double as army

Defenses

- 1 Wall or hedges (magically enhanced plants)
- 2-3 Border forts
- 4-5 Combination of wall or hedges and border forts
- 6 No defensive structures

Faith/Religion

- 1-2 Worships elven deities as established in AD&D supplements
- 3 Worships deity normally associated with another race
- 4-5 Worships unspecified "forces of nature" or the elements
- 6 Does not recognize divine powers as holding sway over them

Temples (skip if non-applicable)

- 1-3 Does not build temples, but worships in groves that are untouched by civilization
- 4 Has one temple central for the whole community
- 5-6 Each home has its own shrine

Main crafts and trade items (roll twice)

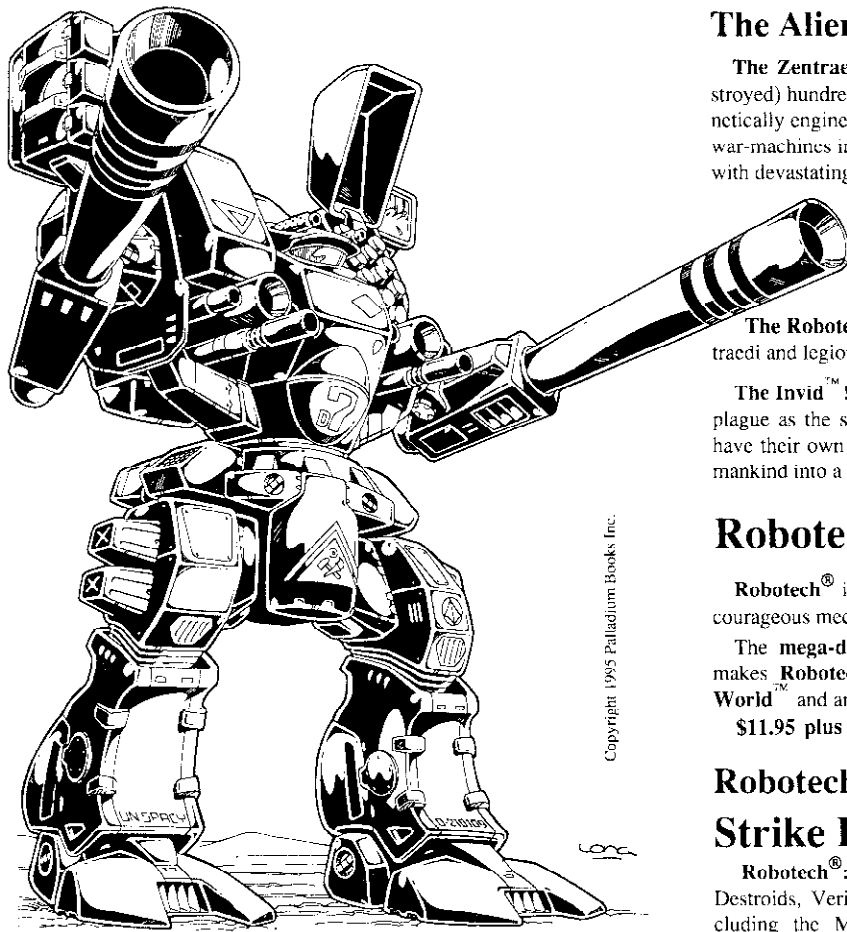
- 1-2 Stone masonry/statuary
- 3 Woodcarvings
- 4-5 Weapons and armor-smithing.
- 6 Wines and produce

Family Structure

- 1-4 Nuclear
- 5 Extended
- 6 Communal

Homes

- 1 No private homes; entire settlement one big commune
- 2-4 Single, nuclear family dwellings
- 5-6 Extended family/clan lives in compound



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by M.D. McConnohie

Descent to Undermountain



How
does
an Orc

swing a sword?

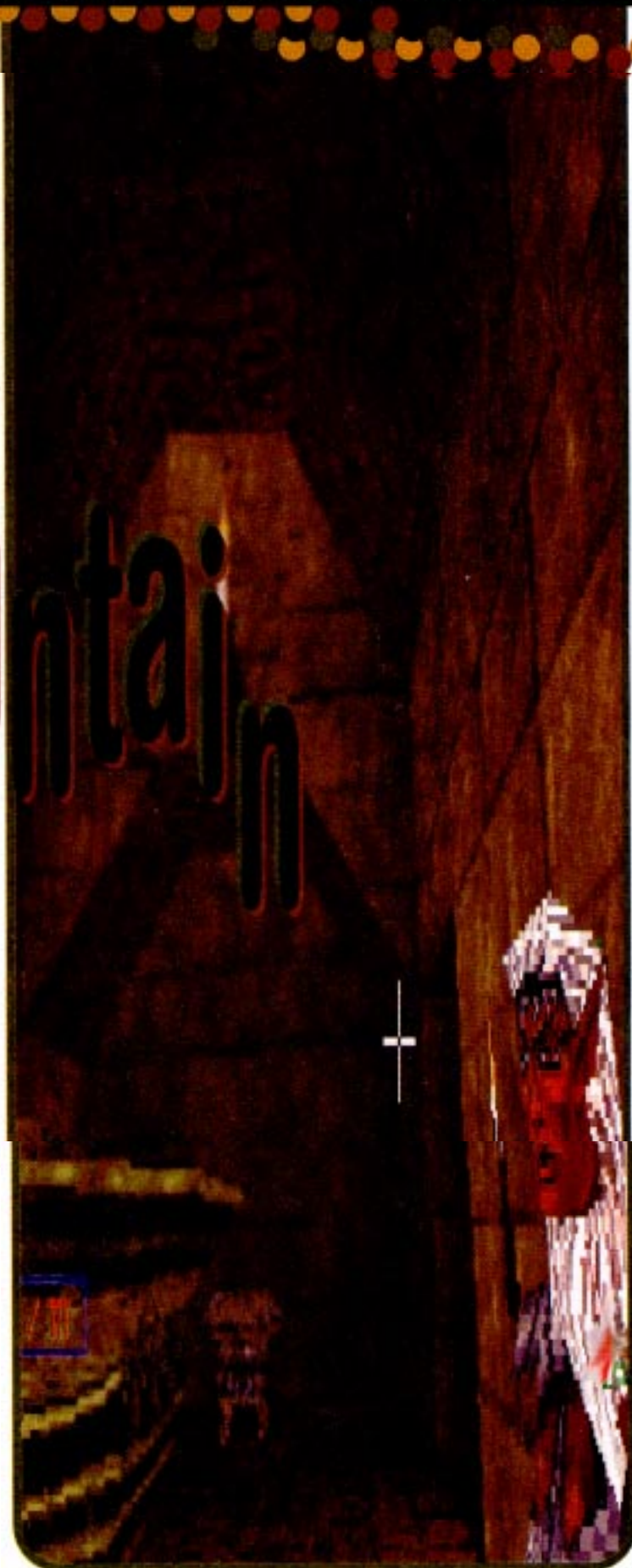
Does a drow chant sound more like Celtic or more like Arabic?

What does a *resist magic* spell actually *look* like?

These are a few of the endless questions that need to be answered when trying to bring the FORGOTTEN REALMS® to life in Interplay's 'DESCENT To UNDERMOUNTAIN™: The Flame Sword of Lloth.'

This, the first fully 3-D action/character-building game, is based on the 3-D engine of the hugely successful DESCENT*. (Descent continues to cut into work hours everywhere as employees network together to blast each other to pieces — an unmistakable mark of success.) Descent 2* will be coming out this winter, and space jockeys everywhere will be lining up to plot strategies and assaults in whole new robot-infested mines.

But how to translate this gravity-less 3-D universe to a more terrestrial form and make it fun?



Interplay Productions had recently signed a licensing agreement with TSR, Inc. for their FORGOTTEN REALMS line, to translate their boxed sets into computer games. This opened a whole new division at Interplay, devoted strictly to TSR games. Upcoming will be close to a dozen brand-new titles over the next year or two, including DRAGON DICE™, BLOOD AND MAGIC™, and PLANESCAPES®. Also in the lineup is DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN.

DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN is set in the stone belly of Undermountain below Waterdeep, an area of dark magic, terrible monsters, and an endless stream of adventures (and adventurers). It's a limitless reach of dark caverns, corridors and rooms, the private playground of the mad wizard Halaster.

Halaster likes to make things interesting, so adventurers could easily find themselves falling into a water pit trap. Of course, there could be electric eels in there: just because a wizard's crazy doesn't mean he's not

There's much more to Undermountain than this. In a land already ancient, this is an incredibly old place. Even before the drow made their descent, there were nameless and terrible things there. They stretch back to a time when gods walked the land and wrestled with the primal energies of creation, and each other.

The Underdark is so vast, so all-encompassing, that even the gods don't know what all is in there. That's at the very heart of this particular adventure, "The Flame Sword of Lloth."

The Flame Sword is a hitherto-unknown power object specific to the Spider Queen, the goddess Lloth.

Legend has it that long ago, with her minions the drow, Lloth wrought devastation on the land. Half-forgotten tales tell of how "Lloth herself led her dark children against the bright elves, and with each strike of her flaming sword, a horror from the Abyss was unleashed

upon the world."

The few historians who studied these ancient events assumed the blade was literally a flaming weapon the goddess wielded on behalf of her dark children. None realized the dark blade's true

power: it could rend the very fabric of reality, opening two-way gates to any plane of existence—including the PLANESCAPES and Chaos.

The Flame Sword was not created by Lloth, but instead by a much older and deeper power that forged four mighty blades, each representing one of the extreme alignments (chaotic evil, lawful evil, chaotic good, and lawful good). Early in her existence Lloth came across the chaotic evil blade, and bent it to her will using deep magics, and investing a part of her own self in the blade.

The world would have fallen entirely into the hands of Lloth and her armies but for a lone elven hero. This now-forgotten warrior made his way into the very heart of the Spider Queen's encampment and stole the blade. At the cost of his own life he took it deep into the Underdark, where it was hidden from even the sight of the gods. Lloth has searched for her blade ever since.

Somewhere, deep in the heart of Undermountain, waits this sword. Its power is undirected, and portals to other planes open unexpectedly, allowing... things.. into our reality. Whoever finds it will either find a way to successfully cloak its energies, or be destroyed by it. There is no middle ground with an object of this power.

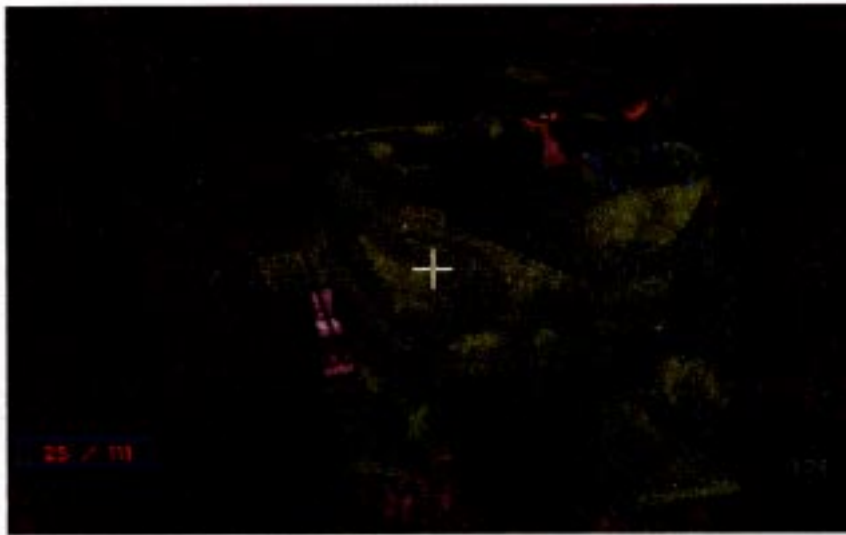
DESCENT TO

UNDERMOUNTAIN: The Flame Sword of Lloth is no casual undertaking.

Just how did Interplay decide to take a laser-blazing space opera and root it in fantasy?

"DESCENT TO

UNDERMOUNTAIN was an absolutely natural progression from Descent," says Mark O'Green, head of Interplay's TSR Division. "We could already see the end of action-only games, everyone jumping on the Doom*-me-too wagon, and it all looked the same—



the same actions, the same re-actions, the same flat-art approach. We wanted to take the next step forward. We needed something that wasn't just another hack-'em-up, that had some character development, and that happened in a living 3-D world."

The game itself is primarily an action game, with many aspects of the more conventional TSR paper games; there are character growth and accomplishment, level gains, experience, and treasure.

Like the space game Descent, DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN will be multi-player, both on-line and in local networks, as well as a standalone game for the solitary gamer. In on-line mode, an adventuring party could consist of a fighter from San Francisco, a mage from New Mexico, and a thief in Saskatchewan.



UNDERMOUNTAIN is fully three-dimensional. You can walk around a temple column, sneak up behind a monster and stab it in the back (if it doesn't hear you coming, which it probably will) or fall into deep pits. If you jump a chasm, you'd better jump hard, because if you fall, it's going to hurt.

Players will encounter humans, dwarves, orcs, goblins, halflings, zombies, skeletons, elves, drow, gnomes, kobolds, mind flayers, trolls, piercers, beholders, gargoyles, spiders, a green dragon, and other things that don't even bear thinking about.

In all, DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN: The Flame Sword of Loth looks to change the face of computer adventure gaming in the same way Descent changed computer space gaming. □

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Dwarven Tombs of the Realms

by **Steven Schend**

Artwork by William O'Connor & Terry Dykstra

The Sleep of Ages

Recorded in the Year of the Bloodbird.

I, Johanna Kherrispehrl of Waterdeep, have undertaken the study of the dwarves of the North and their past. A mage by my skills, I am a historian by trade, and I have spent much of my life in the study and unearthing of lost dwarven cities, mines, tombs, and underground warrens long-lost to the memories of surface dwellers of the Savage Frontier.

Through the gracious generosity and sponsorship of the Blackstaff, I have studied the landscapes and recorded histories of the Northlands to mine the buried history of the dwarves. During my studies, I developed a number of theories that have held up to later discoveries and examinations of ancient dwarven burial structures. Within the past decade, I have uncovered two tombs of note and have included details of what I found there. With Mystra's aid,

Oghma's will, and the approval of Dumathoin, I hope to continue my work for decades hence to restore to the dwarves pieces of their history.

Dwarven Tomb Architecture

It must be remembered that much of the information herein is based on historical study, examination of artifacts and sites, and interviews of various Northern dwarves with long memories. As I have endeavored to uncover the dwarven history of the North, I have found that few dwarves (and even fewer dwarven landmarks) yield their secrets easily.

Origins and Development

The origins of dwarven tomb-building are lost to the ages, but modern dwarves agree that they had simple motivations to such practices, just as humans and other races do. The dead were interred below ground, preferably within deep rock, to protect the remains from scavengers and carrion-feeders.

As with nearly everything built by dwarves, the tombs began simply but became more and more impressive. They graduated from simple rock shaft mass graves to individual shaft graves to mausoleums for individuals or entire clans. While dwarven civilizations rose and fell

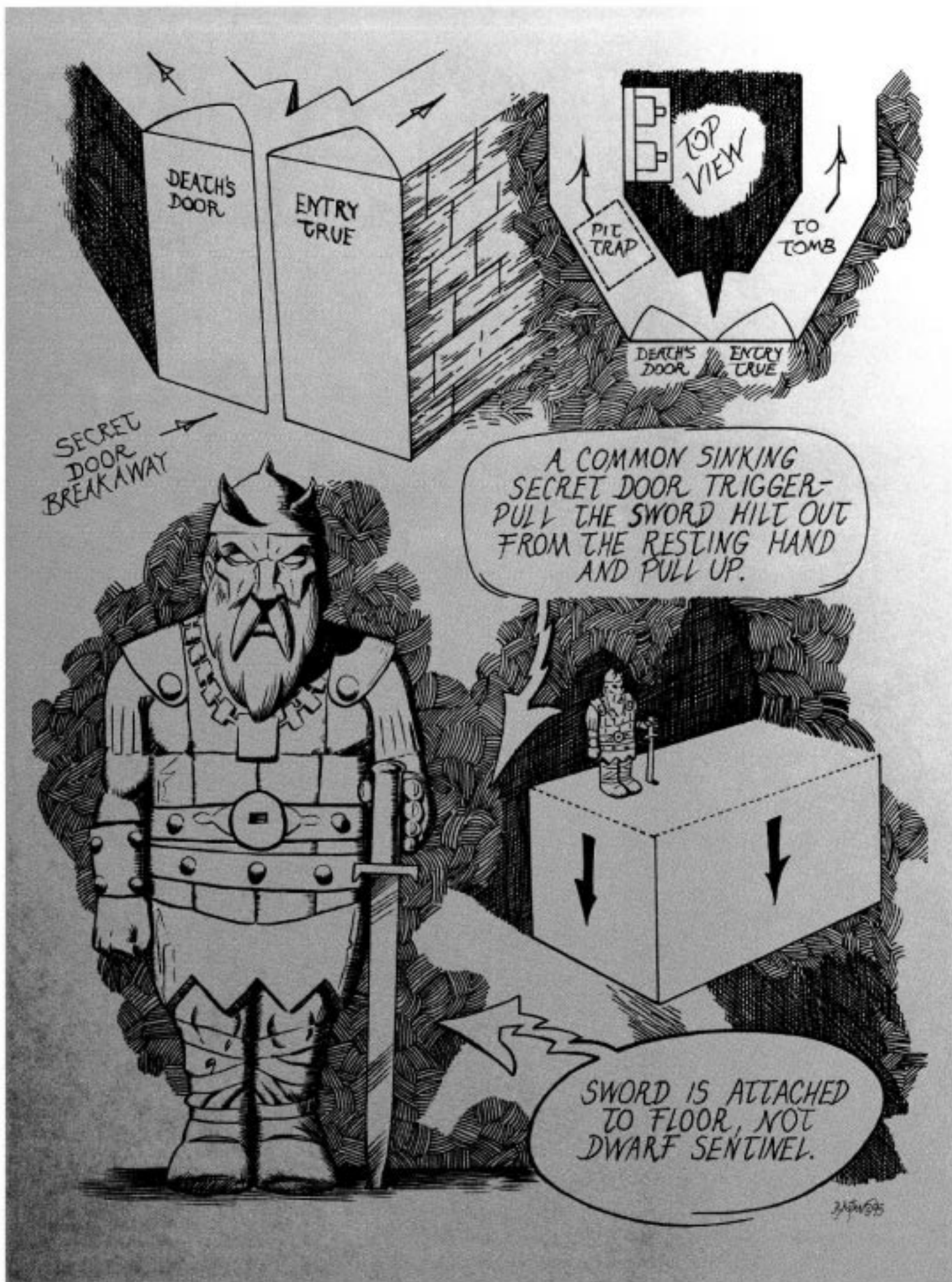
over the millennia, their natural craft with stone progressed, creating more secure areas for dwarves to live in and even more secure ones to dwell in after death.

Dwarven tombs of the past centuries all share these common details, regardless of the status of those interred therein. Some of these features appear on the tomb of an individual if the deceased had been a hero or craftsman of note, but they are common only on clan or large dynastic family tombs.

- The first entrance to the tombs proper is succeeded by at least three rooms: an antechamber (with a mark—obvious only to dwarves, of course—indicating this as a place of dwarven rest), a clan chamber (with various decorations noting the clan name, deeds, and primary purposes), and a chamber dedicated to Dumathoin (not officially his temple, but a layperson's place of worship).

The place of actual burial—the chamber with the corpse—is always at least 50' below the outermost tomb portal.

- A series of rooms exists either inside and directly attached to the tomb or within 100 yards of the entrance. These rooms are either the mortuary, attendant priests' quarters (for a clan tomb with a long-term expectation of service for clan burials), or quite possibly both.



- Dwarven corpses are always interred with at least one item related to their former life. For example, miners may be buried with their picks, warriors have their armor and weapons, and priests are with their holy symbols.

While one might expect differences in structure and details to vary from era to era, major dwarven tombs have not altered notably in structure in over 14 centuries. Also, clan differences have not changed tomb layouts or structure as much as might be expected due to one unifying factor: The priesthood of Dumathoin oversees the building, interring, and protection of any and all dwarven tombs.

Dumathoin's Priesthood

Dumathoin is the patron god of the Shield Dwarves of the North. As Keeper of Secrets Under the Mountain, he is unofficially their protector in death. While it may have been otherwise in the early days of dwarven civilization, Dumathoin's priests have been the primary morticians and tomb protectors since the latter days of Ammarindar, the lost dwarven realm that existed as a contemporary of ancient Netheril. In fact, they do their god justice as "Keeper of Secrets," for it is incredibly difficult to find the tombs at all, let alone plumb their mysteries.

Among the various burial practices used by priests of Dumathoin, there are only three set precepts that must be met. The body must be washed and three or more

stone burial tokens—the corpse's personal mark, the clan's mark, and Dumathoin's mark—must be braided into the corpse's beard. The corpse is then clothed in either the deceased's own armor or a light suit of mail burial armor; for no matter what trade a dwarf plied in life, none enters the afterlife unarmored and unready. Finally, the priest presiding over the burial must create a song honoring the dead dwarf's life and deeds; the song is carved into the lid of the coffin or sarcophagus (or, when in a large clan tomb with numerous niches for the fallen dwarves, onto the back of a mausoleum seal, a plaque or marker covering the recess where the deceased is buried).

The song is never sung out loud in honor of the ever-silent Dumathoin. If someone finds it and speaks or sings the burial chant out loud, it is believed that a curse will settle on the offender. (Some suggest that the corpse itself might animate and smite the offender.)

Burial practices may change slightly to suit particular clans, but a number of changes in burial practices occur upon the passing of a dwarf deserving of special status. In general, there are simply more ceremonies and more attention is paid to the construction of the tomb. The following are some specific variations that might be found in burying important dwarves:

- The burial of a priest is a more convoluted and lengthy process, incorporating aspects of Dumathoin's worship and that of the god the priest served. Priests there-

fore tend to be buried within a well-guarded tomb, and their sarcophagi are surrounded by (if not buried under) tokens and offerings by the priest's friends and faithful. Priests of Clangeddin or Moradin are often interred with the remains of their greatest conquered adversary, ensuring a grand afterlife of battle against dwarf-foes. Unlike many other dwarven tombs, priests' spells are used heavily in the interment of a priest to protect the remains and offerings (and, some hint, to prevent the gods from calling on their servants after their time has passed).

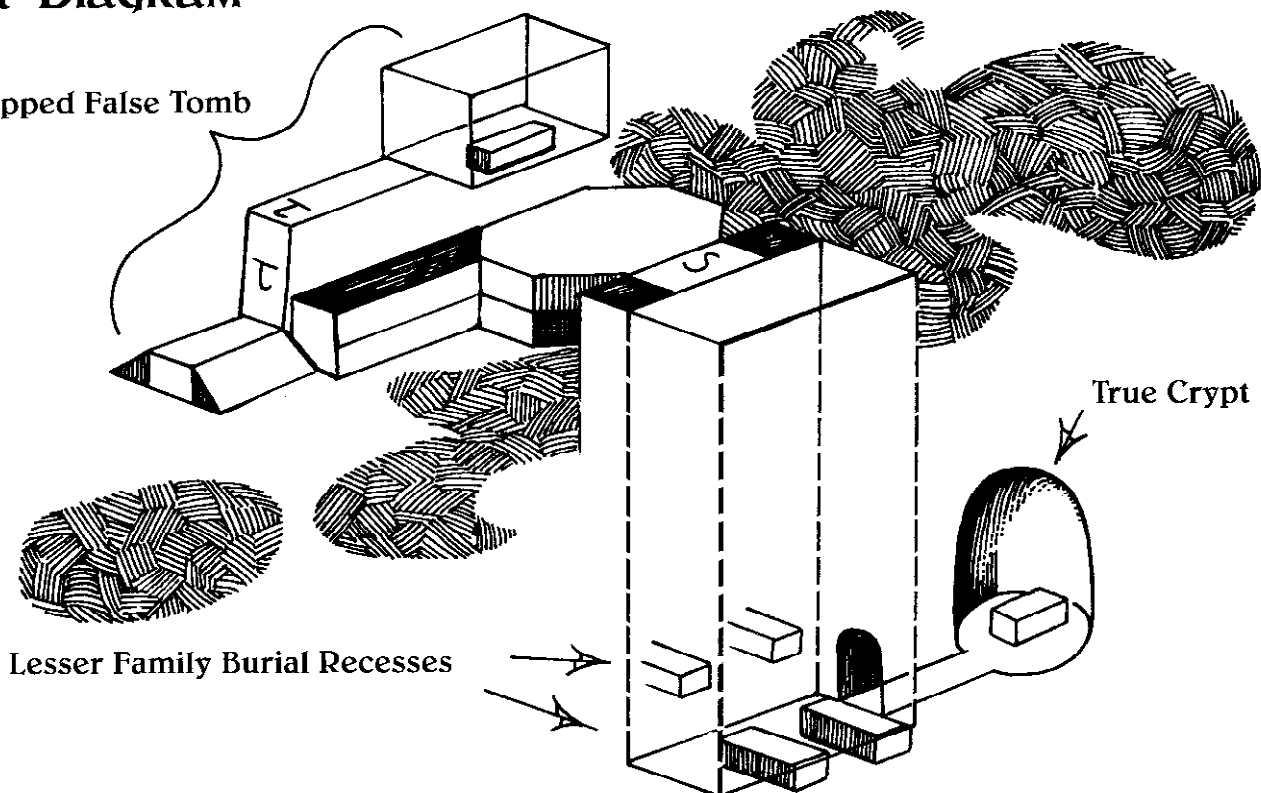
- Clan allies of any race can be interred within dwarven tombs, but only if they fell in battle defending the allied clan, the tomb, or a place sacred to Dumathoin.

- While all others are buried with standard ceremony and accouterments, wizards are always clad in robes made of woven silver and sealed in solid silver sarcophagi (or a burial creche lined with silver); this is due to a superstition born of an old dwarven myth that Dumathoin paid Mystra his weight in silver to garner his faithful protection from the magics that disturb the sleep of the dead. While we know there is little truth in such a legend, the custom still prevails.

- Clan outcasts (assuming they can even find a priest of Dumathoin willing to officiate over their burial) are buried without a clan mark within their beards, and their coffins or burial place markers often depict a broken or marred symbol of their former clan.

Crypt Diagram

Trapped False Tomb



The Entrance to a Prince's Rest

In my studies, it has proven essential to know the dwarven craftsmen behind the masterful constructs I studied. One friend gave me a written description of the final entrance to a particular tomb; he allegedly found it within the records in the tomb of Raglar Stonecutter, a dwarven architect and tomb-maker who died at the time of Delzoun's height. While my friend kept the location of the tomb and the identity of the tomb's inhabitant secret, he swears all the mechanical traps are quite genuine and should serve to deter foolhardy adventurers from attempting to rob the dwarven dead. "After all," he reminded me, "there are precious few who can claim to have plundered the tombs of the dwarves. High time you tall folk were reminded as to why that is."

"The walls glitter with gold, gems, and bright mosaics that glisten in torchlight despite the centuries of dust that should have accumulated on them. The bas-relief on the wall of the antechamber seems so lifelike, you'd swear the hallway was filled with a horde of trolls! Three dwarves stand heroically atop a pile of troll bodies, fighting on against overwhelming odds. The prince, another dwarven warrior, and a standard-bearer appear to be directly in your path, though they are carved on the facing wall as you walk into the hallway.

Though the tomb's guardian bypassed the traps and triggers to the secret door with some special magics, he explained the traps and their working. There are five different mechanical triggers within the 30' high mural to open the secret door to the crypt. Like the door itself, the triggers are next to impossible to find for non-dwarves.

"The correct combination to open the secret door is to activate all five triggers simultaneously; the triggers must then be released in this order: four, five, three, one, and two. Once done, the wall opens to expose the entrance room that sinks down to the crypt. If any trigger is activated out of the sequence above (such as one trigger at a time to start it), the trap connected to that particular trigger is set off.

"The first trigger is the short sword of the prince's warrior-companion. It shifts slightly to the left, along with the pommel. The trap linked with this trigger opens the ceiling 40' above. Then, hundreds of short swords fall from above the ceiling into the room, all point down.¹

"The second trigger is the prince's crown. To activate it, the tear-shaped gem at the front of his crown must be turned point-down over his brow. If the trap is used wrong, the floor rises at incredible speed to smash all persons within the room against the ceiling.²

"The troll engaging the standard-bearer hides the third trigger: its movable jaw and mouth. The trap slams the door out of this room shut, and a pump dumps grease all over the floor and walls. The floor tilts, opening into a steep chute under the eastern wall. The chute slides for 600' and comes to an end at the bottom of a 10' x 10' shaft. Once the victims hit the floor of the shaft, it sinks slightly and the slippery chute rotates back up, the grease preventing any hold on the edge.³ The shaft's ceiling is lost in darkness far above any light source the victims have. There is a pile of rotted rope in the center of the floor and two shattered skeletons lying on it.⁴

"The fourth trigger is the prince's ring: Dumathoin's symbol of a gem inside a mountain is reversed. To initiate the lock, the ring's emblem must be twisted around so the mountain peak points at the king's knuckle. If the trap is activated, the person touching the prince's ring is doused in acid.⁵

"The fifth trigger is the money bag on the standard-bearer's belt; shifting the draw string from one side to the other (and activating the trap) causes a loud click and the entrance to the room slams shut and locks. Holes 2" wide appear in the ceiling and a jingling of coins is quickly heard. A rain of copper and silver coins and gold dust starts falling through the ceiling onto the invaders, invading the nose and mouth of any breathing beings.⁶ⁿ

1. Actually 1d20 swords fall on each character within the room, and the blades all fall at such a speed and number that each has a THACO of 7. If any people are still alive after the onslaught, they must move no quicker than MV 1 or automatically suffer 1d4 hp damage from walking on or against blade edges.

2. The effects are equal to the grease spell on every surface, negating any chance of grabbing hold of anything.

3. This crushing floor trap deals 4d8 hp damage to all within the room and then recedes back to its normal floor level.

4. DMs are encouraged to make the shaft at least 5,000–10,000' high; this mine shaft was abandoned by the dwarves over 15 centuries ago, but there's no telling what it connects to these days.

5. The effects of this acid are identical to the effects of green slime; the PC will be dissolved within two rounds if the saving throw is failed.

6. No matter what the room's occupants do, the outpouring of money and dust keeps coming until the entire room is filled. Anyone in the room is either crushed under the weight of millions of coins or choked on gold dust.

Standard Tombs

A dwarven tomb typically conforms to the following pattern, be it a solitary tomb in the wilderness for a fallen hero or one for a family of miners who still mine the riches beneath Mirabar.

Dwarven tombs and mausoleums are never placed or marked above ground; such practices are only for elves and humans, and a dwarf buried less than 10' beneath the surface allegedly spends the afterlife in discomfort and might even rise again as undead.

One of the main reasons dwarven tombs are difficult to locate is a simple method of wilderness camouflage: Once the body is interred and the tomb is completed and sealed, the burial priest and at least two members of the deceased's family (or friends) cover the stone entrance with earth and smaller rocks, taking care to blend the earthwork in with the surrounding terrain. Lichens and small plants are allowed to grow over the entrance, making the tomb part of the terrain again.

The basic floor plan of a standard tomb runs in two directions: straight back from the entrance and down to the tomb.

There are, of course, many alterations to allow for the local topography and geology, but entrants into a tomb find themselves always moving deeper within the rock.

As stated above, the first room is always an antechamber; its walls are often unadorned, and the room has one or more statues of a dwarf (either the patron deity of the dwarf buried within, or the deceased himself) in the center or corners.

Beyond the antechamber is the clan chamber, often the most heavily decorated room in the tomb. Its walls are adorned with many carvings, bas-reliefs, mosaics, statues, and other decorations. At the very least, the walls are painted or drawn with clan motifs and heroic deeds of the deceased.

The chamber beyond the clan room is always dedicated to Dumathoin. With a statue of Dumathoin and an altar for offerings, the uninitiated and non-dwarves will consider this a temple, but Dumathoin's temples are always in natural caverns; this room is simply for offerings for the deceased in Dumathoin's honor. The chamber to Dumathoin is often called the Protector's Chamber. It usually contains a number of traps and difficult doors into and out of it to discourage crypt robbers.

Beyond that chamber is an entrance leading deeper into the ground. Older tombs or those short on space open into a shaft with a carved ladder or a spiral stair leading down, while others have a standard set of stairs leading down to the crypt level.

Elaborate tombs contain a mortuary and a few additional ceremonial rooms to

honor the clan or the dwarf buried there; if so, these are on a level still above the actual crypt of the primary crypt inhabitant.

The final burial crypt is often unadorned and empty of everything except the coffin or sarcophagus of the deceased, though there are exceptions. If a dwarf was particularly rich, he might have some treasure within his burial crypt; artisans' crypts often contain either their finest or final works—some artists even take pains to commission their burial crypts early and carve or paint a final memorium on the crypt walls themselves. One dwarf of note—the swordsmith Dargoth "Steelbeard" of the clan Trueforger—created two magical axes of such power that they were rumored to fell giants with one blow; he had his crypt built within the Spine of the World and filled it with traps to deter any intruders. Dargoth's final words have led many a dwarf and human alike to their deaths: "Only the strong and crafty soul who can find and breach my tomb shall gain the mighty Axes of Foesdeath. The tests within my tomb shall prove that he is of the mettle to wield them."

Doors within a dwarven tomb are distinguishable from the surrounding walls only by a marked lack of runic carvings, mosaics, or other decorations. Their locks and mechanisms are either beneath the base of a statue within the adjoining room or recessed under a secret floor panel. The recessed locks are most often a set of three handles that must be twisted in certain series of motions to unlock and open the doors. Other door activators include a set of five buttons—keyholes that fit only specific holy symbols as their keys, or even recesses that must be filled with

offerings of gold or precious gems so their weight may open the door.

Tomb markers themselves are simple plaques placed near the burial plot or runes carved into the sarcophagus. The markers identify the deceased by name and list famous relatives of the deceased, the clan name, and place of death. Dwarves do not use dates on their tombstones, and it is assumed that any dwarf should know of a battle or location where another dwarf died. For example, a female healer-priestess of Sharindlar (the dwarven goddess of life and dancing) might be identified as such: "Gaena Aurilstone, daul of Immar Drakeslayer, blood of Minemaster Mith One-Thumb, honored servant and healer of Sharindlar, clan Ironstar. Her lifedance ended at the Clash of Fireskies, purifying the Realms of three tanar'ri with her passing."

Secret doors within dwarven tombs often hide the final burial chamber or—if the deceased was particularly wealthy or was a priest of Abbathor, the god of greed—any separate treasure chambers. While some operate similarly to standard secret doors, they are craftily made and are more difficult for non-dwarves to find. Also, a standard for all but the smallest tombs is a two-way secret door set on a pivot. The easier-to-find secret door (known to the dwarves as a "Death's Door") leads only to a chamber or hallway riddled with traps; the more difficult-to-find secret door trigger (opening the "Entry True") that causes the door to pivot the opposite way leads to either an adjoining hall or the crypt itself.

Nearly any door or surface or container within a dwarf's tomb could contain a trap. Dwarves are second to none with

their paranoia and fears about disturbing the rest of the dead, and they prefer to gear their traps toward killing invaders in tombs outright and with little mercy. If traps are not meant for immediate execution, they simply trap the raider within the tomb and let him starve to death. Either way, the secret of the tomb is protected.

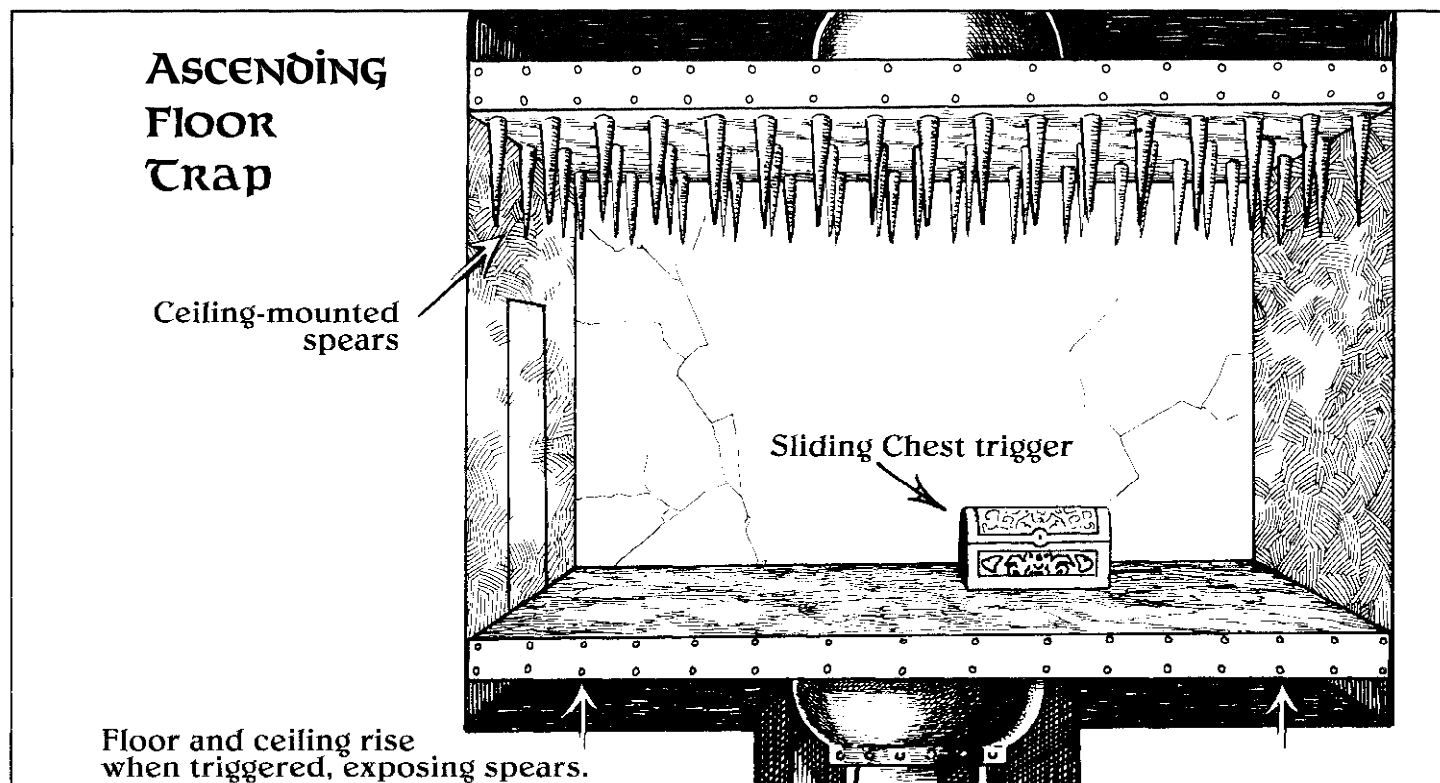
Tombs of Royalty

The tombs of dwarven royalty and dwarven heroes are, of course, much more elaborate and opulent than a standard tomb. While the layout and purpose of the rooms is the same, the scale in which they are built is much grander. Rooms are three times dwarven size at the very least (rooms no less than 12' square), and no expense is spared in ceremonial decoration. Statues are of gold and mithril, and the finest other metals and precious stones adorn many surfaces. Other than these cosmetic differences, royal or grand tombs often share these details:

- Torches rest in magical sconces allowing them to burn indefinitely when a dwarf stands within the room they light. These features are found in tombs of the Fallen Kingdom or in tombs built with the aid of elven allies, as the principal enchantments are elven in nature. A few dwarven tombs are similarly lit, but the torches are carved stone and are attached to natural gas jets.

- Portcullises often are used in doorways if a grand tomb has a large number of chambers or supplementary rooms. The locks and opening mechanisms for the portcullises are identical to those on the doors within the tomb.

- In the final antechamber before the



actual burial crypt, there are one or two additional two-way secret doors (the "Death's Door" and "Entry True" doors) leading to burial crypts identical to the actual crypt. These false tombs are empty of dwarven remains and treasure, but each and every room beyond the secret door has a lethal trap.

- The final approach to the crypt for grand tombs is often deeper than the perceived final level. Beyond the "Entry True" secret door to the crypt is an antechamber with a hidden trigger; activating this trigger causes the floor to sink down to the actual crypt. Ceilings will drop into place above the sinking floor, blocking direct access from above. Traps can be placed all along the descending length of the dropping corridor to deter robbers.

The floor will stop when it is even with the recessed doorway leading into the crypt. A lamp enchanted with some variation of a *continual light* spell often hangs above the sarcophagus in a small vaulted burial chamber. If this final crypt is that of a clan ruler, his immediate family is either interred in a sub-chamber beyond with multiple lesser sarcophagi on daises or placed in recessed burial creches in the walls of this room.

- One secret door within the tomb complex leads to a natural cavern beneath the tomb attendants' quarters; all grand tombs are permanently staffed with guardian priests, and this cavern is the official temple to Dumathoin used by the priests.

Standard Dwarven Tomb Traps

I have found a number of repeating traps that tomb-builders of Delzoun and its contemporaries have used in a number of tombs. They are all lethal and quite blood-

thirsty, though anyone protecting their legacy tends to be so.

The following paragraphs are traps translated into "game-speak" for DMs, who should feel free to insert any of these traps within any dwarven tombs, specifically placed near or around the final burial place for a single figure. If the tomb is attended by priests (either as an actively used clan tomb or guarded by undead), they must have ways to mechanically or magically disable the traps to allow entry. All dwarven tomb traps are hidden in unexpected areas, reducing their chance of detection by 30%.

Corridor Trap: Balancing Blocks

The floor of the hallway is made of smaller 4' square blocks. The floor blocks are set to pivot and roll when weight is placed on them, crushing a foot or leg between blocks or between a block and the wall. Once the block has shifted, its direction cannot be reversed to allow the person to pull his foot free. DMs are encouraged to alter the pattern of where to step to avoid crushing one's feet. This trap encompasses the entire hallway leading to or around the final crypt.

The victim must save vs. paralyzation (at a -2 penalty) to pull his foot free before it is trapped. If successful, the stone simply rolls one way; if the save is failed, the victim suffers 1d12 points of damage and is pinned to that spot with a crushed foot or leg.

Antechamber/Room Trap: Ascending Floor

The 20'-high and 20'-square ceiling within this room is peppered with hundreds of 2"-diameter holes. A large stone chest

rests against the far wall. It appears locked and hard to move, but there are scrapes on the floor that look like it should be opened by shoving it toward the right corner. Moving the chest triggers the trap and releases the springs beneath the floor. The ceiling rises up quickly along with the floor, and bloodied, barbed spears project through the holes.

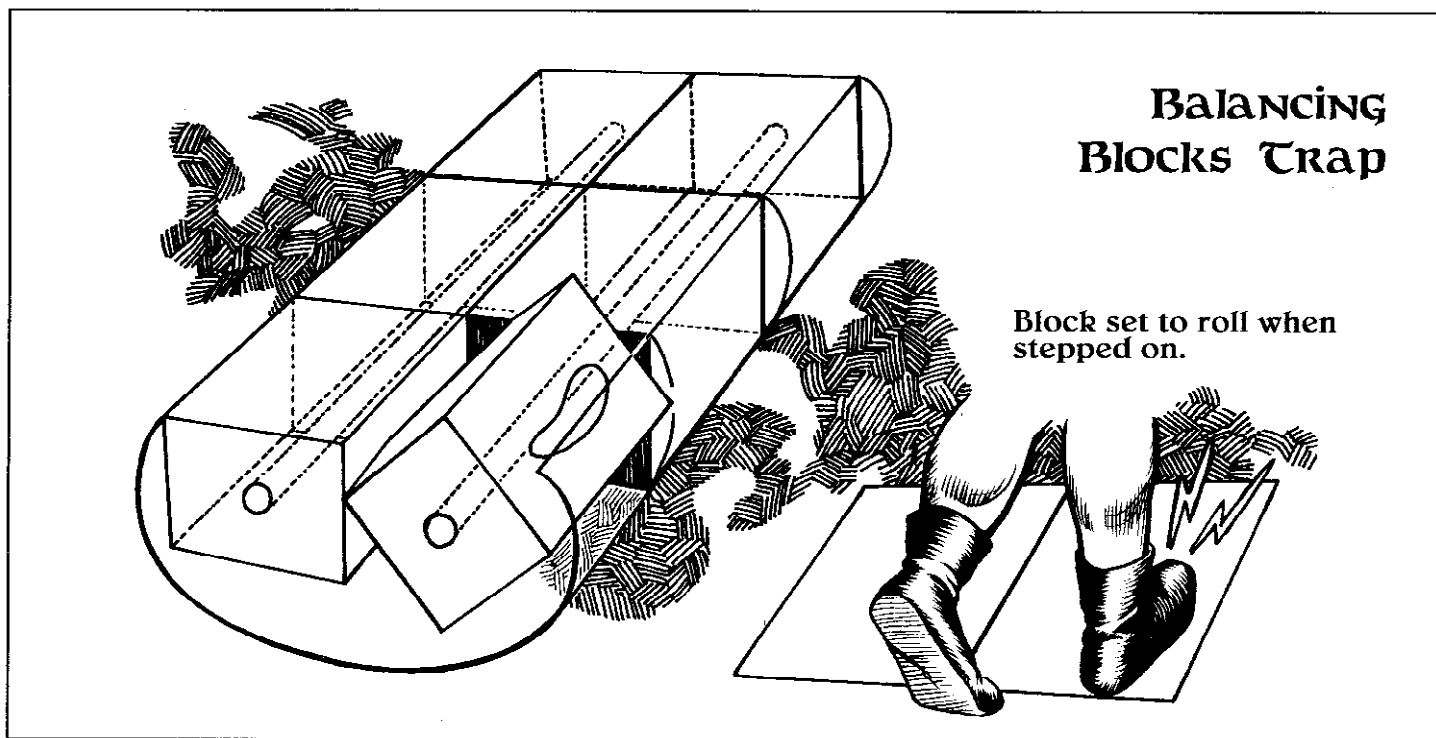
The spears strike victims at a THACO of 5 and deliver 1d6 hp damage per hit; a medium-sized character can be only be hit by a maximum of 10 spears, and a small character is targeted by only six spears. After an hour, the mechanisms retract, withdrawing the spears and doing an additional 2 hp damage per spear hit due to the retracting barbs.

Door Trap: Slamming Door

Once this room is entered, a tomb-robber can easily find this secret door *ostensibly* leading into the crypt. This "secret door" actually turns the wall into a falling slab, and once it is found and "opened," it falls on all invaders within the room, crushing them with 4d10 hp crushing damage. Anyone standing just outside the room is safe and sees this entry room and the "crypt" as one combined room now.

Crypt Trap: Emerald Treasures

A stone sarcophagus lies on a raised stone dais. The top of the sarcophagus is carved like a dwarven king lying in state. There is an easily defined lid that can be slid off the base. Once the lid is moved more than a few inches, a stone block falls to cut off the only exit from the room. The sides of the sarcophagus fall away, and green slime flows out onto the legs of the perpetrators. Due to their close range and their size, the slimes flow onto victims manipulating the lid with a THACO of 9. Ω

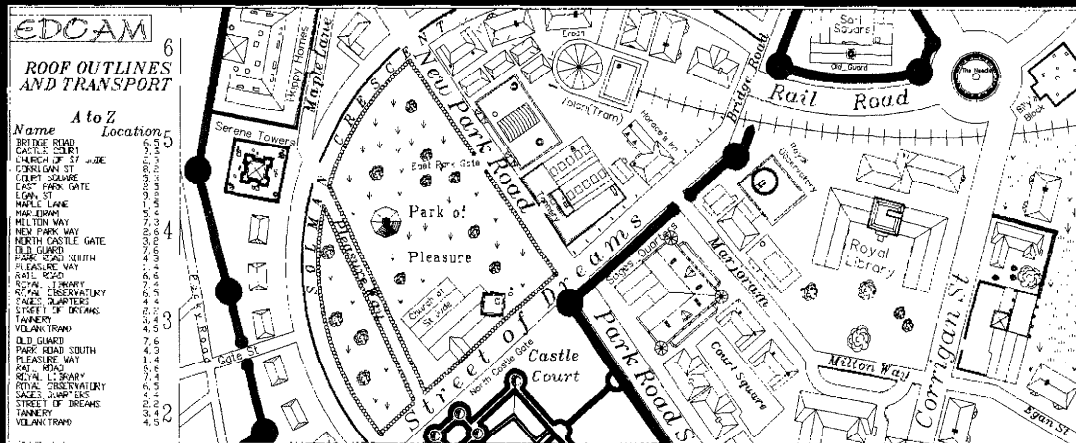


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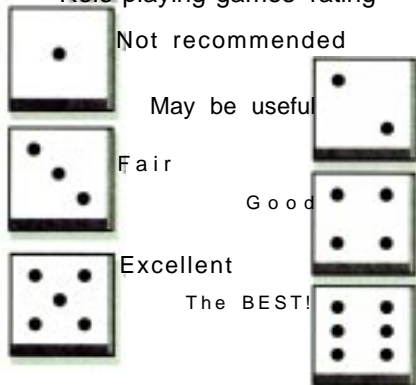


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Delicious new releases for game-hungry veterans

Role-playing games' rating



To you, perhaps, GENCON® Game Fair '95 was a warm bubble bath of a weekend that continues to conjure blissful memories. But to me, it was an ice water dunk tank, and I'm still shivering. Sure, I enjoyed the spectacle, the crowds, the \$2 soda pop. But where were the new role-playing games? There were card games, sourcebooks, and novels galore. And the small press served up more than the usual number of quirky little RPGs (some of which we'll be dissecting in the next month or so). But what happened to the majors? Usually, you can look forward to splashy GENCON debuts from big guns like

Chaosium, FASA, Steve Jackson, and West End. Not this time. Maybe GENCON was out of synch with the product cycle. Or maybe the majors had chosen to squander, er, invest their resources in the collectible card fad, er, hobby.

In any case, I was tickled to see that TSR, Inc. and Wizards of the Coast, the industry's King Kongs, came through with terrific new products. Maybe their enthusiastic reception will inspire other companies to redouble their commitment to role-playing. Or maybe we're going to have to steel ourselves for a drought. A looooooog drought.

By the way, I had more than the usual amount of trouble coming up with this month's ratings. The featured games are great for veterans (earning them five pips) but not so great for beginners (dropping them to three pips). So I went for an average, and gave them four pips each. How's that for a hedge?

Everway* game



162-page Playing Guide,
64-page Gamemastering Guide, 14-page Guide to the Fortune Deck, 90 Vision Cards, 36 Fortune Cards, four Source Cards, six Quest Cards, 24 character sheets, one 16" x 11" map sheet, one 8" x 11" map sheet, boxed
Wizards of the Coast \$35
Design: Jonathan Tweet, with Jenny Scott, Aron Anderson, Scott Hungerford, Kathy Ice, Bob Kruger, and John Tynes
Editing: Jenny Scott
Illustrations: Doug Alexander, Rick Berry, Daniel Gelon, Janine Johnston, Hannibal King, Scott Kirschner, Ed Lee, John Matson, Martin McKenna, Ian Miller, Jeff Miracula, Roger Raupp, Andrew Robinson, Christopher Rush, and Amy Weber
Cover: Susan Harris

I wasn't surprised to hear that Wizards of the Coast was publishing an original role-playing game. That was about as unexpected as the sun rising in the east. After conquering the world with the Magic: the Gathering* game, and dabbling in board games (like the Roborally* game) and reprints (the underappreciated Talislanta* game), an original RPG was just a matter of time.

More surprising was Wizards of the Coast's choice of helmsman: Jonathan Tweet. It's not that Tweet lacks experience. Having published everything from AD&D® supplements (such as *Black Spine* for the DARK SUN® setting) to card games (the wonderful *On the Edge** game), he's accomplished more in a decade than most designers manage in a lifetime. Nor does he lack talent; his rejects (like the *Stone Age* project he has hidden away in his closet) sound more interesting than most of the stuff that turns up the stores. But as evidenced by his previous RPGs, like the

Ars Magica* game (which stood fantasy on its head) and the Over the Edge* game (role-playing in the *Twilight Zone*), Tweet's not a mainstream kind of guy. And if I were president of Wizards of the Coast, investing truckloads of hard-earned Magic money, I'd have wanted a mainstream kind of product. (This, perhaps, is why I'm not president of Wizards of the Coast.)

In fact, Everway is so far out of the mainstream, it's barely recognizable as an RPG. For starters, it has no dice. It has no tables or charts. A deck of cards directs the flow of the game. Monster bashing, treasure hunting, dungeon crawling—bye-bye; Everway is pure narrative. We've seen these elements before: the Amber* game pioneered diceless role-playing, White Wolf's Vampire: the Masquerade game championed storytelling over combat encounters, and TSR's 1988 *BULLWINKLE AND ROCKY* game used cards to help players improvise adventures. But they've never been integrated so faultlessly or presented so imaginatively. Everway will have veteran players and critics (like me, who tend to overreact to anything off the beaten path that's even halfway well-done) doing handsprings. Novices, however, should proceed with caution. This is hazardous territory.

Thanks to Wizards of the Coast's deep pockets, Everway receives a first-class production. We get over a hundred state-of-the-art playing cards, as heavy-duty and aesthetically appealing as their Magic brethren. We get plastic trays to hold the cards. We get full-color, suitable-for-framing character sheets. We get three rulebooks that look like art catalogs, so elegant that I was afraid to bend the pages. Despite an occasional syntactic tangle ("Lacking animals can have a big effect on the human cultures that live there"), the concise, conversational writing makes the game a snap to learn; it's as if Tweet himself were sprawled on your couch, explaining the rules. Poetic flourishes—walking through a teleportation gate is "like falling through the air on a starless, silent night"—evoke the ambiance of a bedtime story. The only clinkers in the box are the lifeless maps. The city map consists of a bunch of buildings plopped inside a circular stone wall, devoid of streets and without a scale of miles. The Bonekeep map, basically a river and a big ditch, has exactly four locations labeled. The maps appear to be the work of artists, not cartographers—believe me, you can tell the difference.

Everway gives players remarkable latitude in designing their characters, though they're nudged toward fantasy archetypes like spell-casters and warriors. Tweet lays down the ground rules: no modern age or science fiction PCs (high tech doesn't fit), no villainous PCs (too disruptive), no PCs from history or mythology (you're supposed to use your own imagination, not someone else's), no non-humanoid PCs

(uh... well, you just can't have them). Sound restrictive? Not really. It's a plea for sanity. With a system this tricky, the referee already has his hands full; he doesn't need to be dealing with dinosaur PCs or Captain Kirk.

After determining a general premise for his character, the player selects five Vision Cards. Each Vision Card features an ambiguous image on one side, a list of open-ended questions on the other. The player interprets the images and answers the questions any way he likes, using his reactions to flesh out his PC's background and personality. For instance, one of the Vision Cards shows a woman in a blue robe pouring liquid over the head of a comatose man; the questions include "What is happening in this scene?" and "How are the man and woman in blue connected?" The player might decide that his character (the comatose man) was rescued by a witch (the woman in blue), and he now owes her a debt of servitude. Another card depicts a building carved in the side of a cliff; the questions: "What is the building?" and "Who built it?" The player might decide that the building is a temple; therefore, his character is a priest. The architect is the blue woman who revived him; she's a priestess, who rewards him with new spells whenever he completes a mission on her behalf.

A second set of cards, the Fortune Deck, adds more refinements. Like the Vision

Cards, the Fortune Cards have ambiguous images: a man tossing pebbles in a field, a warrior struggling to swim in an ocean. Unlike the Vision Cards, they also have titles: the man with the pebbles represents Sowing Stones, the warrior represents Drowning in Armor. Also, each card depicts two traits, one printed at the top and another, the "reversed" trait, at the bottom. Sowing Stones shows "Fruitless Labor" and "Ceasing Fruitless Labor." Drowning in Armor has "Protective Measures Turn Dangerous" and "True Prudence." With guidance from the referee, the player uses the images, titles, and traits to determine his PC's Virtue, Fault, and Fate. He might decide "Ceasing Fruitless Labor" means his PC is sensible (that's his Virtue), and "Protective Measures Turn Dangerous" means he's impulsive (his Fault). As for his Fate, that's essentially the province of the referee; Drowning in Armor might mean that sooner or later, the PC will face a life and death threat that.. uh, I'm not sure. I never quite figured out the Fates, and the rulebook wasn't much help.

In what looks to me like a concession to traditional RPGs, players receive 20 elemental points to spend on powers (read: spells) and elements (read: attributes). The point cost of a power depends on its potency; fast healing costs one point, invulnerable costs three. Points not spent on powers can be invested in elements,

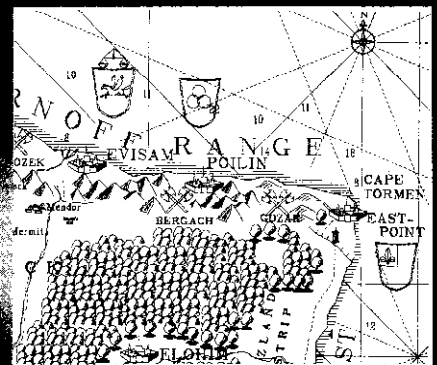
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including Fire (sort of like AD&D game's Strength), Earth (sort of like Constitution), Air (sort of like Intelligence), and Water (sort of like Charisma). The higher the score, the more competent the character; a Fire 2 PC will lose most bar brawls, a Fire 7 PC can hold his own against a dragon. To round out his character, the player adds a motive (wander the world, eliminate evil, seek beauty), a name, and a few possessions.

Thanks to the generous number of examples, character generation is easy and fast—it took my players less than half an hour to get their PCs off the ground. And it's fun, especially for those of us who enjoy a respite from die-rolling now and then. But the system requires a lot of second-guessing; more so, I imagine, than Tweet intended. The powers, for instance, are frustratingly vague; here in its entirety, is the description of Shadow Whispers: "The hero can speak to the dead (though some ghosts are in no shape to hold a conversation, and some simply don't want to talk." But how do you know which ones can talk? How long will they hang around? How much do they know? Tweet's responses, I assume, would be something along the line of: "It's your game. You decide." That's fine for guys like me, who have a feel for what works and what doesn't in an RPG. But this is the kind of approach that drives novices nuts; a first-timer might not be sophisticated enough to realize that a ghost who knows everything virtually guarantees an unplayable adventure. A Weak Mage (level 2) is "capable of a decent spell or two." So what's "decent?" And which is it—one or two? I guessed—not inferred, but guessed—why it was necessary for characters to have Virtues, Faults, and Fates, since they didn't have much effect on play (at least not in my game).

Likewise, resolving game actions requires a keen story sense and a fair amount of guesswork. Tweet offers three methods—he calls them laws—which can be used interchangeably. According to the Law of Karma, the highest rating comes out on top; if a Fire 2 character and a Fire 4 character get into a fight, the Fire 4 character wins. If he likes, the referee can fudge the numbers to account for unusual circumstances; if the Fire 4 character has two broken arms, he fights as a Fire 1 character and loses. The Law of Drama allows the referee to do anything, within reason, so long as it makes for an interesting story; the Fire 2 character wins with a lucky punch, because his long lost love is about to walk through the door. The Law of Fortune relies on the Fortune Deck; to resolve an action, the referee draws a card and interprets the result based on the image, the title, the trait, anything—he can base his decision on the color of the lettering if he likes. If I draw the Sowing Stones card with the "Fruitless Labor" phrase face-up, I might decide that Fire 2 is too inept to hold his own against Fire 4.

Or I might decide that Fire 2 pops his opponent with a rock (sowing stones—get it?). How much damage does he suffer? It's the ref's call. ("Determining the exact way that any given wound or other problem hampers a hero is up to the gamemaster...")

On page 141, Tweet refers to the Fortune Deck and asks rhetorically, "Isn't that like flipping a coin to see whether he succeeds?" His answer: "Not at all." My answer: Sure it is. But who cares? It doesn't matter—it shouldn't matter—whether you use coins, cards, or random whims. In the world according to Everway, rules never subvert the story line, a bad draw never interferes with an interesting subplot. Depending on the participants' experience, this approach can be liberating, or it can be maddening.

The proceedings take place in a PLANESCAPE™-like multiverse, the various worlds (called spheres) linked with teleportation gates. Everway, the city serves as home base. With its kings, wizards, and unicorns, Everway doesn't stray too far from conventional fantasy; it's a bit lighter than the Earthdawn* game, a bit darker than AD&D. The setting is sketchy but promising; provocative details—a humanoid dragon that gives language lessons in the public library, mourners carrying a shrouded corpse to the House of Dusk—hint at good things to come. The first-rate adventure, Journey to

Stonedeeep, gets the campaign off to a roaring start.

Evaluation: In my regular AD&D sessions, I never use dice or charts, nor do I allow my players to use them. The same goes at my convention appearances—no dice at my tables. In 10 years, I've yet to have a single player abandon ship.

Everway codifies the freeform style favored by me and (I suspect) thousands of other referees. It makes for a brisk game, and Everway, to its credit, plays at blinding speed. But to an unprecedented extent, the success of an Everway adventure depends on the improvisational skills of the referee, his ability to come up with interesting plot twists, characters, and scenic details on the spur of the moment. And players must respond in kind, relying on their imaginations instead of die-rolls to forge their characters' destinies. I've spent many a painful afternoon watching would-be referees struggle to stage elementary AD&D encounters and exasperated novices trying to translate lists of numbers into three-dimensional personalities. It isn't easy, even with detailed rules and funny-sided dice to use as crutches.

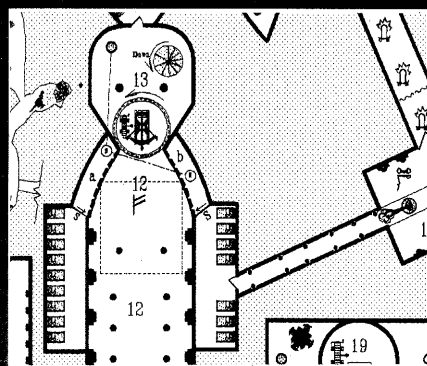
I suspect Tweet has underestimated the average gamer's aptitude for improvisation. But I could be wrong. In 1987, I thought *Ars Magica* would last maybe a year or two. It's about to enter its fourth edition. It'd be just like Tweet to surprise me again.

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Let's face it—we're power mad. In 1981,
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boxed set took player characters to level 3,
but that wasn't far enough. By 1984, the
D&D® Companion Set had upped the ante
to level 25. That still wasn't enough. So in
set number five, the Immortal Rules, PCs
became gods. *Dragon Kings*, 1992's AD&D
expansion for the DARK SUN® gave us 30th-
level characters. In 1994, the Council of

Wyrms expansion gave us player character
dragons. Now comes BIRTHRIGHT, in
which PCs become surrogates for entire
nations. That's right—we're talking player
character countries.

The idea isn't new. The *Aria** game
(enthusiastically reviewed in *DRAGON*®
Magazine issue #214) covered much of
the same ground. But BIRTHRIGHT avoids
the clutter that made *Aria* such a
headache, despite its innovations.

Combining the best elements of *Aria* with
bits of the Civilization* computer game,
BIRTHRIGHT allows AD&D players to exer-
cise their power fantasies in a compelling
new format.

It's a beautiful package, boasting color
art on nearly every page and one of TSR's
best-ever sets of poster maps (the Everway
design team would do well to look them
over). The data-packed rulebooks include
everything but an index, a necessity for a
project this ambitious (try to find, for
instance, the rules for rebellion). The
attractive playing cards are the low-tech,
punch-out kind, as collectible as last
week's newspaper (and thankfully, for
cost-conscious gamers, about as cheap to
produce). If you like, you can store your
cards in the cheesy little treasure chest
that comes with the game; but if you do, it
won't close; I prefer rubber bands.

BIRTHRIGHT player characters resemble
their standard AD&D counterparts, aug-
mented with bloodlines, regency points,
and domains. A PC's bloodline represents
his noble heritage. Additionally, it gives the
PC special magical powers, regardless of
his character class; in a sense, bloodlines
serve the same function in BIRTHRIGHT as
the Red Curse does in the RED STEEL® cam-
paign. As part of the character creation
process, each player rolls on the Bloodline
Strength Table to determine a bloodline
score. Bloodline derivation, obtained from
another table, links the score to a particu-
lar deity. Most of the powers—called
bloodline abilities—duplicate familiar
spells, such as healing and protection
from evil. But there are a few oddballs,
too, like touch of decay (the ability to
destroy inanimate objects) and divine aura
(a reaction check bonus). My players
squawked about the system's inequity—
powers are distributed more or less at
random—but over the course of a long
campaign, I don't think it matters much if
one guy starts with divine aura and his
neighbor doesn't.

Regency points represent the strength of
a PC's mystic bond with his domain, the
region he rules. The domain, which func-
tions as an extension of the PC, consists of
his home province (a county or township)
and a variable number of holdings (guilds,
temples, sources of magic) and assets
(roads, castles, armies). As the domain
grows, so does the PC's pool of regency
points. A PC spends regency points to
boost his bloodline score and perform
domain actions (which we'll get to in a
minute).

In addition to standard AD&D turns, representing the activities of individuals, BIRTHRIGHT PCs also execute domain turns, representing the activities of kingdoms. A domain turn begins with a random event, which introduces an obstacle (a trade route closes) or an opportunity (a rival kingdom considers a treaty). After resolving the event, the PC tallies his regency points (based on the size of his holdings), collects taxes, and pays maintenance fees. He then carries out as many free actions as he can afford (most "free" actions cost a gold bar or two, the BIRTHRIGHT equivalent of 2,000 gold pieces). For instance, he might build a road, spy on his enemies, and beef up the public treasury with a few gems from his personal hoard. During the action round phase, the heart of the domain turn, he performs up to three domain actions, most of which require the expenditure of regency points and gold bars. Domain actions include Research (allows spell-casters to create magical items), Trade Route (generates gold bars), and Realm Spells (unleashes enchantments like death plague and bless army that affect an entire province). Success is not automatic; some actions require success rolls, others can be thwarted by enemy actions. If a player opts for the Declare War action, the game shifts to a separate battle map; the role-playing game transforms into a military simulation, where playing cards substitute for miniatures.

Considering the system's scope, it's surprisingly smooth. I wasn't crazy about the military game; the rules are okay, but what are the non-participants supposed to do while the antagonists fight it out, go to the movies? (The designers allow the DM to simply declare a victor in lieu of playing out a battle, so most of the time, I kept the war cards in their rubber bands.) Some sections, the random events in particular, are too vague; the Magical Event entry consists of a few sketchy examples and this definition: "Some bizarre event takes place." I'm still not sure how the tax rates work; what happens if I tax the peasants into the poor house? But overall, the rules are clear and clever. Diligent managers are rewarded, incompetents are beaten into the ground. And as its policies develop, each domain acquires a unique personality; mine might be avaricious and unpredictable, yours might be conservative and dependable.

BIRTHRIGHT takes place in a self-contained campaign world called Cerilia which, except for the bloodlines and mobs of bickering rulers, is basically your standard fantasy setting. *The Atlas of Cerilia* provides a succinct history and an overview of the terrain. *Ruins of Empire* catalogs the various domains, describing their holdings and aristocracies. To use the domains as player surrogates, however, you'll need the corresponding sourcebooks. *Roesone* and *Endier*, the first two volumes of a theoretically endless

series, contain regional maps, stronghold blueprints, background notes, resource lists, and strategy tips—think of them as the most detailed character sheets you've ever seen. *Blood Enemies* offers stats and biographies for about two dozen NPC rulers, most of them monsters; an interesting effort, but non-essential.

Evaluation: I don't claim to understand every nuance of BIRTHRIGHT. I haven't had enough time. According to the rulebook, as many as two or three standard AD&D adventures are supposed to occur between domain turns; only one domain turn transpires over the course of the introductory Family Matters adventure (which, by the way, is pretty good). At this rate, I'll still be shaking down the system when I'm in the old folks' home.

Some preliminary conclusions:

1. This isn't for the inexperienced. BIRTHRIGHT adds another layer of complexity to a game that's pretty tough already.
2. BIRTHRIGHT rewards military strength and aggressive expansion. Not only does this tend to pit player against player (in contrast to the cooperative efforts encouraged by traditional RPGs), it downplays scientific, cultural, and social developments. Significantly, there's no domain action for Technological Breakthrough or Artistic Achievement.
3. Somewhere in BIRTHRIGHT lurks a stand-alone political simulation, some-

thing along the lines of the Diplomacy* game. I'd love to see the TSR game wizards dig it out. As presented here, the BIRTHRIGHT rules are so much frosting; they deserve to be the cake.

That said, BIRTHRIGHT remains an engaging, high-IQ expansion for AD&D. Not only did I have to deal with fire-spewing monsters and booby-trapped treasure chests, I also had to manage an economy, command an army, and squelch a peasant uprising—it was a great way to spend the weekend. I never felt like a god (like I do in Civilization) but I sure felt like a king. So what's next, player character planets?

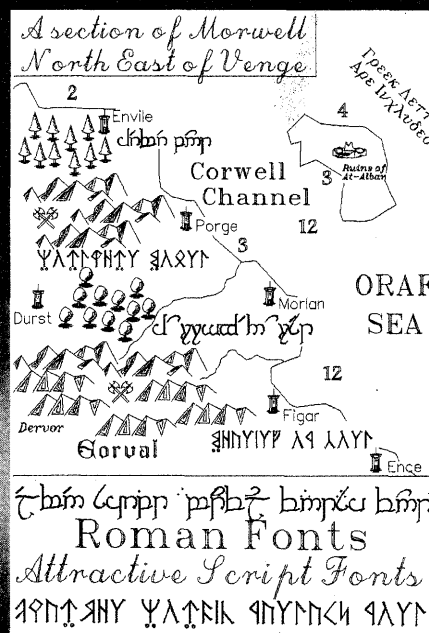
Short and sweet

Labyrinth of Madness, by Monte Cook. TSR, Inc., \$10.

Need to teach your AD&D characters a little humility? Send 'em through the *Labyrinth of Madness*, a merciless dungeon crawl for PCs of level 15 and up. A network of subterranean temples is discharging muck like a backed up toilet, and somebody's gotta clean it up. Snobs might call this approach old-fashioned (or just plain old); there's not much of a story, and logic rarely lifts its ugly head. But if your idea of a good time is navigating an obstacle course of convoluted traps and foul-tempered monsters, this way to the stairs—going down, of course.

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Aztlan, by Nigel D. Findley. FASA Corporation, \$18.

This Shadowrun* game sourcebook deftly blends Aztec mythology with cyberpunk sleaze. Topics range from corporate security policies (the Aztechnology company uses cockatrices and basilisks as watchdogs) to fashion tips (buy the expensive synthleather; the cheap stuff makes you sweat). The religion chapter is especially good, with essays on prayer ceremonies, blood magic, and clerical computer modeling. And it's funny. In the middle of an interminable historical summary, a commentator interjects, "Is anyone else getting as bored of this drek as I am?" One of the late Nigel Findley's best and—sadly—one of his last.

The Ultimate Mentalist, by Steven S. Long. Iron Crown Enterprises, \$18.

A supplement for the Hero* game universal system, The Ultimate Mentalist is a one-stop resource for psionics of all persuasions. Unless you're a rules lawyer, skip the jargon-heavy introduction ("A character under the effects of injurious Mental Illusions will only take damage on phases indicated by the attacker's SPD") and dive into the campaign material that comprises the bulk of the book. You'll find a smorgasbord of nifty villains (like Brainchylde and Psychophant), gadgets (mindblades, psychic sifters) and staging tips (how to deal with the Mentalist Sniper Syndrome). The appendix shows how to convert it all to the GURPS*, Shadowrun*, and Mage: the Ascension* games.

Impressive.

Chilling Tales, by Lisa Smedman. TSR, Inc., \$10.

Those interested in the RAVENLOFT® setting but not sure where to begin should pick up *Chilling Tales*, an anthology of seven easy-to-play, fun-as-a-pillow-fight adventures. Though based on the exploits of Rudolph Van Richten (the alleged author of TSR's Van Richten's Guide series), the real stars are the monsters, a menagerie of vampires, ghosts, and mummies straight from the late, late show. Copious staging tips ease the transition for AD&D-ers interested in seasoning their fantasy campaigns with lightweight scares.

Rifts Underseas, by Kevin Siembieda and C.J. Carella. Palladium Books, \$20.

Even if you're not a fan of the Rifts* game, you should still be reading the sourcebooks. With the possible exception of the Call of Cthulhu* game, no RPG features a nastier, more outrageous cast of characters. Silicon sea snakes, also known as zomba, flop onto ship decks to slurp up sailors. Spiny-headed stidjron eat sperm whales for lunch. The Naut'Yll humanoid has three bulging eyes, the feet of a frog, and a mouthful of wriggling tentacles. If creeps like these don't make your skin crawl, they ought to least raise your eyebrows.

The T.W.E.R.P.S. Files, by Niels Erickson. Gamescience, \$3.50.

Who'd have thought that the TWERPS* game, the world's easiest—make that the world's goofiest—8RPG would survive for almost a decade? And who would've dreamed it'd spin off 12 (!) supplements? This parody of everybody's favorite paranormal TV show serves up a few pages of skeletal rules and a bundle of cheap laughs; the bad guys, for instance, belong to a group called P.O.O.P. (People Opposed to Other People). It's dumb. It's fun. It's three and a half bucks.

Miskatonic University, by Sandy Antunes. Chaosium, Inc., \$11.

Talk about overdue. Call of Cthulhu* fanatics have been waiting for a guide to H.P. Lovecraft's academic madhouse for 15 years. It's a feast for trivia hounds, with comprehensive lists of library holdings, faculty appointments, and financial aid opportunities (Deep Ones might consider applying for the Fisheries Scholarship). But it's also burdened with blah maps, stretches of dull text, and useless handouts (what am I supposed to do with an ad for an ice cream shop?). There's not much history, and the Mythos takes a back seat to the routines of college life. I could go for a second volume with a little less minutiae and a little more meat.

Ice Age* game, by Skaff Elias, Jim Lin, Chris Page, and Dave Pettey (based on the Magic: the Gathering game by Richard Garfield). Wizards of the Coast, \$8 (60-card starter deck).

Cool!

Rick Swan has designed and edited more than 50 role-playing products, including the Complete Wizard's, Ranger's, Paladin's and Barbarian's Handbooks for TSR, Inc. You can write to him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, LA 50310; enclose a self-addressed envelope if you'd like a reply.

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I have developed a recurring problem with a DM friend of mine, and am curious about how common this problem is and if anyone has any advice. This friend is one of the finest DMs and role-players I know; his only problem seems to be in his treatment of new PCs. Recently he strongly urged some mutual friends and me to join a campaign of his that has been running for several years. Despite my arguments, he started the new characters out at roughly half the level of the characters already in the campaign. This is not the first time he has done this and it consistently galls me. It appears that he doesn't want to overshadow the players who have earned their levels, magic items, holdings, etc., but he is definitely ruining the fun for the new players. It wouldn't be so bad if there were more that we could contribute, but there are no apparent problems that cunning or role-playing can resolve that the raw power of the veteran players cannot; to make matters worse, he is constantly humiliating or off-handedly endangering the new players as if to amuse the older players or present them with a challenge of rescuing their "wet-behind-the-ears" colleagues. In all fairness, I didn't stay with this group long enough to witness any problem solving or role-playing. His adventures are good, but could easily entail hours of humiliation and boredom before I was even asked for an opinion, let alone a chance to enter the thick of the action.

I have argued with this DM before, and still do not see the logic in his actions. Granted, new players should not be given

earned, but starting them grossly underpowered is unfair and sure to ruin any chance of their playing a pivotal role, not to mention ruining their fun.

Geordie Keefe
167 Concord St.
Gloucester, MA 01930

Michiel van Veen's letter in DRAGON® Magazine issue #220 begs rebuttal.

Joan of Arc was an inspired woman who did much for France, but however much she may have deserved it, she was never appointed to be a general of France, let alone being knighted. Knighthood and marshalling were "males only" institutions; from the Dark Ages through the Renaissance, very few women were knighted.

To agree with Michiel, a black knight was not typecast as an evil knight; but there we part paths. To say a black knight was "simply black-skinned" is pure fantasy. Reality is not so politically correct. Edward "the Black Prince" of the Hundred Years' War was the son and heir of England's Edward III, not a visiting African potentate. He earned this sobriquet by dint of his black armour. Various red knights have come to light in history; this had nothing to do with suntans or political affiliation. Like so many other nobles, they were known for a predominate color in their wardrobe.

Unmarried women in Medieval and Renaissance times certainly could not date whomever they chose. This has been true up to modern times. Romeo and Juliet deals squarely with this topic, and the rebellion of youth against parental wishes. To believe that there were "actually less prejudices" in the Middle Ages than today is to hide one's head in the sand. People in one place would sneer at others from the next county and be downright hostile towards foreigners. Prejudices in the Medieval world ran deep.

Prejudices should exist in your fantasy world. They add depth and excuses for much of society's ills, real and imagined. Nothing, even laws and societal beliefs, is guaranteed to be fair. This should be true even in a fantasy world.

Allen Mixson
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Anaheim, CA 92807

My letter is in response to Mr. Adulhaqq's plea for help in issue #221.

Your problem is one that seems to plague many beginning DMs who have players who refuse to conform to a desired behavior. First, you have to understand your role as Dungeon Master before you can mend the problem. In basic terms, you are the omnipotent being in your world. You have the power to shape kingdoms and ruin heroes. The players fit into this scheme in that they are the beings to whom you are paying most attention. It is your job to challenge and amuse them with adventure and excitement. Never should you play an adversary to your players. How could such a contest be fair? You could destroy them with a powerful beastie or bizarre calamity. While this may punish offending players, it does not earn respect for you or your world. If the overt does not work, rely on subtle methods.

Let's study the case where a shopkeeper is killed for a few experience points. In any city, a shop owner may have ties to the thieves' guild. He pays a monthly fee to keep his shop and his person free from harm. When errant rogues (i.e., your players) kill him, this makes the guild look bad. If they do not punish the party they will lose funds from other shopkeepers. The guild will resort to any means necessary to harm the party and save face.

By encounters, show your party that they aren't the biggest fish in the pond. There must be mages and swordsmen much more powerful than they. Certainly it is possible for one such NPC to witness the party behaving in an evil manner. A mage of power could subdue the party easily with web, blindness, or charm person spells. You are the DM. Use any trick to coerce the players, but remember: style is everything.

C. Joseph Walker
3210 Costa Alta #75
La Costa, CA 92009

I am writing in response to Hussain Adulhaqq in issue #221. I see two possible solutions: traps, and the lord whose merchants are being robbed and murdered.

I can't believe a weapons dealer wouldn't have something rigged so people couldn't use his wares against him.

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sharp. Now you hear about a band of outlaws slaying shopkeepers in your lands. Time to get a warband together and go after the scoundrels. This should solve your problem as the PCs should be kept running from a high-level warband. The knight's men can show up repeatedly as they track the PCs, and they can be used as a prod to get a storyline going.

Karen Remick
 1360 Airport Way #1134
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Few things inspire me to write letters, but H. Adulhaqq's letter in issue #221 has.

The main reason you are experiencing these problems is, you aren't making your PCs face the consequences of their actions. Whatever a character does has consequences. For example, you mentioned you had a problem with characters stealing the equipment they need instead of purchasing it. The consequence of this action could be that the PCs are known as thieves. Because of this, innkeepers put out "no vacancy" signs, tavern owners won't serve them drinks, the city guard harasses them every chance they get, clerics won't heal them, and any of a dozen other logical consequences. Try having the shopkeeper hire a new security specialist with a seedy background, one proficient in "elimination of problems." Have him catch one of the PCs stealing. Describe to the PC that a very sharp blade has just been put to his throat. Give him the option of leaving and never coming back, or floating face down in the local river. I don't care what the rules say: if you slice a man's throat, he will die without immediate attention.

You're giving experience points for killing a shopkeep and his help or a town guardsman? If anything, you should be penalizing your players for this. But, again, if you'll just think of the consequences of their actions you should be able to stop this. First of all, killing the shopkeep and his help is murder, plain and simple. If there are any paladins in the group, immediately strip them of their paladinhood. Second, the penalty for murder in most places is death. If PCs are caught, have them executed in a graphic way. Do not reward stupidity or cruelty. If they murder a guardsman, have the other guardsmen hunt them down ruthlessly, pulling out all the stops. This is what cops do to cop-killers.

Roy Penrod
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 Grayville, IL 62844

In Peter C. Zelinski's otherwise first-rate article "Class Action" (issue #217), he says that it is "difficult to imagine an adventuring party consisting solely of bards." I beg to differ. One of the most enjoyable campaigns I have ever played in features just such a party.

What could be more natural than a

troupe of entertainers wandering from place to place in search of fun and profit?

Our traveling theater company performs dramas written by the Loremaster, directed by and starring the Thespian, with the rest of the party playing supporting roles. Each has his own schtick to ensure a fair share of the limelight for all; thus, serious clowning is the domain of the Jester, who also draws crowds with his tumbling; the Blade shows off his weapon-skill in solo displays and also choreographs the fight scenes; the Meistersinger is the chief musician. Lately we have recruited a Gallant; she and the Blade have yet to appear together, but if they do, it will surely be so that the Gallant can die heroically and heart-rendingly, foully slain by the villainous Blade.

Off stage and looking for trouble, the members of the troupe complement each other just as happily. Experience point for experience point, none matches a fighter, for they cannot have exceptional strength nor weapon specialization, and their base THACO is rather worse. On the other hand, no one is an arrant incompetent, either, not even the Loremaster, and between the Blade's or the Gallant's useful kit benefits, the Jester's surprising 18 Strength, the Thespian's happy knack for picking up *any* weapon and trying it out (including an ogre's club, to date), and the elven Meistersinger's bowmanship, we have no shortage of both melee and missile capability.

Assuming, that is, the need to resort to violence in the first place. Our Meister singer has often been able to persuade dangerous animals to leave us alone. Nor are the rest of us socially inept, and this has a wide variety of applications. Consider the humble dungeon door as a test case. Fighters or priests might batter it down the druid might *warp* it, and wizards could blast it open or *knock*, and thieves might pick the lock. Bards have most of these options, but they could also choose the lateral approach of finding out who has the key and wheedling it out of him. Many other cases may arise when brute force or a waste of spell power can be avoided by judicious knowledge of whom to daunt and whom to humor.

It can readily be seen that so far from being the least likely choice for a one-class campaign, the bard is one of the most appropriate choices imaginable. This is facilitated by the kits introduced in *The Complete Bard's Handbook*, and five "plain vanilla" bards would be less differentiated and less exciting.

Parenthetically, I'd like to observe that none of us gave much consideration to playing a multi-classed bard—one of the few bad ideas in *The Complete Bard's Handbook*. It's hard to know how to role-play a jack of all trades who also happens to be master of one; it's equally hard to understand how this person had time to learn all of the many and varied skills of the bard

and still manage to achieve excellence as a fighter, mage, or whatever.

Douglas Porter
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I've a problem with DMs who aren't willing to let me into any group. The first strike against me is that I'm a girl in what seems to be a predominantly guy-played game. The second strike against me seems to be that my character is too strong for their liking. She's a 50[th-level?] drow, and due to a very clumsy DM's slip-up, very powerful. Nor will they let me start with a 1st-level character, as they claim they're too advanced in their game. I've tried gathering my own AD&D® group together, but down here in Georgia, no one seems interested.

Linda Edwards
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Hahira, GA 31632

This is in response to Eric Shearer's letter in DRAGON Magazine #217. It is sometimes difficult to determine what the PCs of your campaign should know or be able to figure out. The easiest way I know is this: if the PCs are native to that world, they should know the surroundings of their birth, and have generalized knowledge of other areas they have heard of or seen as they travel. If it is already known to them, your details can be general. If the area is *unknown*, give good details with a hint of vagueness so as to give the PCs a clue that this is unfamiliar territory. In essence, they already know they are in a strange place and want to know what they see around them.

Remember that as DM, you are part storyteller, among other things. Enhance your storytelling. Reading books that give good descriptions may give you insights as to how to better your storytelling and flesh out your descriptions. Using your two examples ("You are in a dark forest..." and "You are 50 miles west of Corvia..."), the first could be said, "The forest you are in is a bit strange. Some of the vegetation you see you recognize, but the trees with the roots in the air and the branches underground, and the bush off to your left eating that deer is like nothing you've ever seen." The second could be, "You are in a meadow. Off to your left you see a river meandering through and into the forest. You know this place. You are near Corvia." If they ask how far, you can tell them, "About 50 miles or so."

As the GM, you are the master of all knowledge; you control the information, and what is given out. If your PCs should already know, tell them. If not, give them only as much as they see, or how much you want them to know; but describe it richly enough so they can picture it in their minds.

Anton J. Uselmann
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Gold Beach, OR 97444

I have noticed a trend lately concerning the role of women, and especially the number of women in role-playing. The main focus seems to be that there are not enough women in the hobby.

My opinion is that the hobby is doing just fine with the amount of female players there are now.

No, I am not "threatened by women players and DMs" as Heather Darling (issue #219) suggests in a gross overstatement of how "most" men react to women in game sessions. I also recognize the contributions some women have made to the industry, such as Margaret Weis of DRAGONLANCE® fame. But I believe such women show a rare interest in a game in which men are more likely to participate.

My main concern is what I believe to be a false notion that women must be involved in the game for diversity's sake.

Males and females have a number of interests for which the opposite sex has little care. While there are women who enjoy traditionally male activities such as fishing, football, and yes, role-playing, they are a minority. I would welcome women into my role-playing session, but if they don't come I'm sure the hobby would not suffer.

Jason G. Ward
Englewood, CO

I am writing in response to Joe Walker's letter in issue #218, concerning the invincible characters in his campaign, includ-

ing a mage slinging *wish* spells around like they were cantrips. I found my own way of dealing with wishes early on in my gaming career.

At first I had banned them, but the players started to complain and I realized that it was subtracting from my game. I then hit upon the idea that if I didn't want too many wishes being slung around wreaking havoc in my campaign, I had to make the players more hesitant to use them. I did this by interpreting any wish completely literally. For instance, I had my players engage in a fight on dragonback, and one of them was getting slaughtered, so even knowing that I would somehow warp his wish, he felt it was his last chance, so he used his ring of wishes. His wish in the haste of battle was for 50 more dragons at his back to help him beat his opponent. He neglected to specify alignment, so 50 red dragons appeared and after killing his opponent killed him as well.

Because of my method of interpreting wishes, my players have become hesitant about using them. This has led to some interesting situations when they were in dire peril, and I would have allowed them a correctly interpreted wish, and they did not use one. They instead came up with some exiting and unique methods to escape certain doom.

Jeremy Prada
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A Thousand and One Words

by Mike Shema

Artwork by Michael Mott

It's Not What You Do, It's How You Say It

A picture is worth a thousand words, or in AD&D® game terms, a well-rolled 50d20. Since attack rolls only use only one d20, you can imagine the difficulty in visualizing combat by only rolling dice and declaring hits and misses. Detailed rules for realistic combat would be a monstrous undertaking in terms of game mechanics; but in the realm of imagination the venture becomes simple.

Hack-and-slash campaigns are a notorious manifestation of combat relying on endless die-rolls without true role-playing. When the campaign moves away from simple statements of "I hit" and "I miss" to more descriptive terms, the encounter's become more exciting to visualize and they offer a higher level of role-playing. This demands more of the players and the DM, but results in heroic battles.

In its most basic form, combat involves the PCs and their opponents attacking in turn. Die rolls determine what, if any, damage is taken. Ironically, this is a very passive method of play. To improve on this one must describe *how* the opponents are attacking and *what* they are doing to defend themselves.



Attacking

Describe the method of attack in terms of what it does rather than its type.

Bludgeoning weapons such as maces and staves crush, smash, flatten, and pound. Piercing weapons thrust, pierce, and skewer. Slashing weapon slice, chop, and cut. Natural weapons accomplish their tasks with the same descriptions, but can also bite, rip, claw, tear, and shred.

The difference between "you skewer the mind flayer" and "you use your sword on the mind flayer" should be obvious. There is no difficulty in using either phrase, but the first gives a truer sense of battle. A thesaurus contains many words to substitute. These examples are to get you thinking.

An attack has one of two possible outcomes; either it succeeds or it fails. Successful attacks might be small nicks that bit through armor or slipped inside a parry. A character may have fainted a downward strike only to spin the blade into a sweep to catch his opponent in the side. Most attacks strike the torso, but one should feel free to choose other parts of the body to target. (Keep in mind that the combat rules are not affected by these changes; called shots must still be called.)

All players know that their characters miss quite a bit more than they hit, so you need to create a pool of "miss" descriptions to draw from. Decide on reasons for the miss. Attack rolls only decide that the miss occurred; did the attack swing wide or did the monster duck out of the way? Was the opponent's armor too tough? Was the attack parried? The sword may have slid off the armor or the character may have misjudged an opponent's movement and swung his sword too early.

If the opponent suffers damage, then describe it. The key is *how* something happens, not *what* happens. Where is the wound? What does it look like? Did the fighter's sword slice across his opponent's chest, or did a priest's mace crush an arm? Blood and gore do not have to spurt everywhere, but swords can still slice to the bone and rip into armor.

Defending

There are two kinds of defense: weapon or armor interference (blocking) and using Dexterity (dodging). Virtually any weapon can be used to block or parry. (This is not the parry defined in the *Player's Handbook* or *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*; it is a term to replace the DM's pronouncement that "he misses.") An attack that misses may have been blocked by a well-placed weapon or deflected by a shield. In other cases it may have simply been weak and bounced off the armor. Describe what blocked the attack and what direction the block took (e.g., "The drow recovers and raises his sword, barely parrying Grenyen's blade before it hit.").

In dodging, the attack was so poor that it missed altogether or the character evaded the attack by moving out of the range or the path of the weapon. This can be accomplished by leaps, ducks, dodges, and feints. Some players may wish to capitalize on PC class or abilities. Mages will want to rely on quick feet to stay out of the range of swords, a thief may simply dodge between attacks, and a fighter may choose to deflect blows with a shield or parry.

The following example illustrates descriptions applied in combat. Note that the numbers play a role in gauging how well the attack was and the strength of the damage.

Bill: Wolfe will punch his spear into the gnoll's chest. [Rolls a 13 to hit, for 6 hp damage.]

DM: Wolfe slams his spear through the gnoll's chest, crushing a rib and rocking the beast on its heels. The gnoll swings its battle axe down toward Wolfe. [Rolls a 10 to hit.] The force of your attack punches the gnoll back enough to knock his attack off-balance. His sword slices through the air a few inches away from Wolfe's left arm.

Dave: Kitt tries to slam her mace into the gnoll's right flank. [Rolls a 5 to hit.]

DM: Kitt's attack comes too late and swings harmlessly through the air.

Bill: Wolfe attacks again. He'll try to spin the spear-shaft into the gnoll's kidney. [Rolls a 14 to hit for 1 hp damage.]

DM: While Kitt's attack occupies the gnoll, Wolfe swings the shaft in to hit the gnoll's broken rib. The gnoll howls in anger and for a moment looks dazed, but its armor seems to have taken the brunt of the blow. [An initiative role is made.] Before Kitt moves, the gnoll drops its feigned daze and attacks Wolfe off guard. [Rolls a 14 to hit.] It traps Wolfe's spear shaft against its body with its left arm, pulling Wolfe closer and [rolls 7 hp damage] opens a gash across Wolfe's chest with its axe.

Dave: Kitt steps to the side and swings at the gnoll's right arm. [Rolls a 16 to hit for 3 hp damage.]

DM: The gnoll howls again and involuntarily drops its axe. It spins and lashes out at Kitt's face with its good arm, [rolls a 3 to hit] but the crushed rib slows it and Kitt easily dodges the blow.

Dave: Kitt pulls a dagger out of her boot and brings it up in an arc toward the gnoll's gut. [Rolls an 18 to hit for 3 hp damage.]

DM: Kitt dodges under the gnoll's arm and neatly plants her dagger in the beast's stomach. The gnoll grunts and goes down.

When to Use Detail

Players are less reckless with their characters when they have a clear picture in their mind of what is going on.

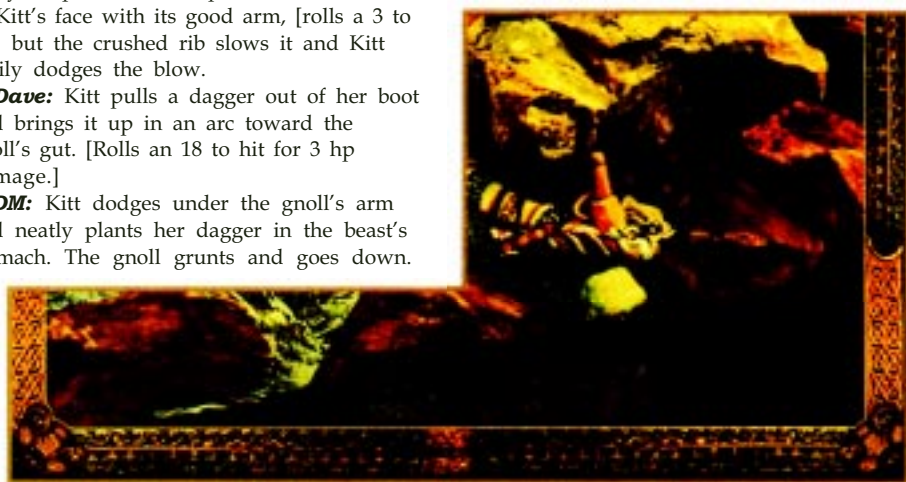
Describing battles blow by blow adds more excitement, but it also adds to playtime. You may not find it necessary to describe every battle in this manner, but the DM could adjust the number of encounters to take this into account. If your current gaming style tends to rely mostly on hack-and-slash, then the battles will become more exciting than just, "Oh, we attack and slay the creature" by adding a sense of role-playing within the battle.

Getting used to playing out combat sequences takes a while, but when players feel comfortable with it, they will do more than just hit and miss. Consider the example above. When the gnoll locked Wolfe's spear against his side, Wolfe could have attempted to push the spear shaft into the gnoll and knock the beast down, or pull the gnoll off-balance so it could not attack.

It is up to the DM to decide the difficulty of the action and whether its effect on the battle will be more than just rhetorical. In the example, the gnoll's locking the spear down did not affect any rolls; it merely served as an explanation of the gnoll's attack that flowed with Wolfe's actions.

This can especially increase the atmosphere of a RAVENLOFT® campaign. Consider a use that will lead to horror checks: a priest fighting a mummy inflicts the maximum amount of damage possible with his flail. A wound opens up revealing a rotted body oozing with worms and smelling disturbingly like a ghast. The sight of the wound coupled with the suggestion of a ghast's incapacitating smell is enough to scare the player as well. Try to scare another player by describing a wraith reaching into his character's chest and clawing his heart.

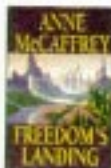
When their characters swap stories at an inn, players can reflect on some great feat of swordsmanship or exceptionally clever action rather than simply stating that they killed something. The game exists on in



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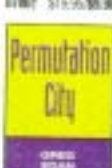
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Bazaar of the Bizarre

Natural Endowments

by Steve Berman

Artwork by Stephen Schwartz

The problem all started when a player wanted a character who would be a devoted priestess to a nature god. Much like a druid, the character was protective of the wild and its denizens. The religion was rather fanatical in its observances, however, and would use no tools not hand-crafted.

It seemed simple enough at the start. Adventures were specially designed so that all our players would be interested, with extended forays into both the wilderness and cities. One day I discovered a glitch. As the campaign progressed and the other characters gained in experience and acquired magic items in their travels, the nature priestess seemed to only have a few potions to her name.

I discovered that the majority of the magical items found in the *DUNGEON MASTER®* Guide and most *DRAGON®* Magazine articles are produced by urban

craftsmen and then enchanted by wizards or fashioned by lost races and sects. This priestess turned her back on a magical censer (it had been fashioned by a silversmith), and even snubbed a polished gold ring of three wishes. So while the other characters had possessions of suitable power, hers was in sore need of something to bring her up to the level of the others. An enchanted wooden staff to give her a better chance in combat was only a so-so idea. I needed to create something natural and yet magical, something she could use often and be proud of.

Many of the magic items in the AD&D® game imply civilization. Though one could easily describe a ring of three wishes as a twisted band of gilded leaves rather than a circlet of gold and gems, it is hard to change the image in the players' minds.

Logically, a more primitive sort of magic had to precede that of the towns and

cities. Shamans and priests and druids and hedge wizards would still have arcane objects at their disposal. This, then, is a discussion of magical objects not of refined products crafted by tradesmen, but of raw resources hand-crafted in tents or caves.

All such natural magic items would be crafted from materials one could find out in the wilderness. That is not to say that the craftsmanship will be slighted, as skilled hands can still work bone and wood, antler and stone to form beautiful and impressive objects. As nature is neutral in alignment, so will most such objects be unaligned or of neutral temperament. The more powerful may even possess an aura of magic undetectable to low-level wizards who need a *true sight* spell for their dweomer to be revealed.

The DM must consider first what purpose the new magical item serves, in what form it appears, and whether certain classes should be barred from its use. With natural magic items, however, appearance is almost always directly related to function. The rural craftsman has the three basic things to work with: animal, vegetable, mineral. Simple enough. Or is it?

First off, the type of animal will greatly reflect on the nature of the dweomer. Is it the skin from a deer or a mountain lion? Surely one is different than the other: speed and agility versus might and fierceness. The inherent traits of the animal could well be bestowed upon the wearer or bearer. One should also consider that

the animal might be the totem spirit of a tribe or symbol of a god. In the latter case, would not the shaman fashion a cloak of protection from such a creature? And the pelt of animal is not all that may be used; the skull, the horns, the hooves, even the tail, might be considered to hold some magic or be added as decoration.

Just as animals have different traits, so do plants. Consider the mighty oak, ash trees that survive being struck by lightning, and the weeping willow. What would be different about a staff fashioned from birch rather than pine? What of a flowering plant, a shrub, even a weed? A rose is a rose, but a thistle also has uses. Petals or carved roots or even seeds might possess some special properties and be used in more than mere decoration.

Minerals could range from simple rocks to colored stones to lumps of unworked precious metals and gemstones. All were chosen either for their location (this rock was found in the Sacred Valley of Mugli), appearance (the sky's hood is reflected in the blue of this stone), or their shape which might resemble something. Primitive artisans did carve stone, but their techniques were different than city dwellers' and dwarves'.

Basically, anything that ancient man could use as the basis for myths and legends can be utilized by a creative DM.

Here are a few samples of natural magic items. I have included how and why each item was fashioned. All were originally intended with druid and nature priests in mind, but anyone with some connection

with the wilderness could make use of their powers.

Claws of the Great Bear

Description: Several druids and nature priests of a more martial disposition have acquired these charms. The claws appear as a necklace of fur and sinew, decorated with a hanging pair of large black bear claws.

Powers: The *claws of the great bear* must be worn for its magic to be activated. Once per day, the bearer can increase his Strength to 19, this effect only lasting for one full turn. During this time he gains all of the benefits of such high might, except that the bonuses to hit probability (+3) and the damage adjustment (+7) are only included when the character is attacking with his bare hands (no *cesti* or hand gear of any sort are permitted).

After the additional vigor has abated, the character quickly grows fatigued, suffering a -2 on all rolls, until he has a chance to sleep. Then he enters a hibernation-like state, deeply resting for a number of hours double to the amount by which his Strength was raised (for example, a druid with a Strength of 13 would sleep for 12 hours straight). During this time, the character may have penalties to wake prematurely, dependent upon the DM's judgment.

While worn, the claws also offer a +2 on all Constitution and Wisdom saves and complete immunity to *fear* spells or effects.

Silver Branch

Description: The wood elves were the first ones to be seen using *silver branches* in their nighttime ceremonies to preserve and defend their forest glens. Each such branch appears to be made of pure silver—not of wood—with the heft and feel of the metal. No leaves or fruit cling to these branches. How some humans managed to acquire such items from the fey folk is unknown. It is perhaps better off that way.

Powers: When grasping a *silver branch*, all plant sphere spells cast on a night with some lunar activity (no new moon) have their duration increased by 50%. Should a full moon be presiding that night, the spell's duration is doubled.

The branch sheds a pale, cool light in a 50' radius, only after dusk, and any fairy folk (such as brownies or pixies) who use any sort of natural invisibility power can be seen faintly in this light. The penalty for striking at such a dim target is reduced from -4 to -2.

Some of these items need a command word spoke in elvish to make use of the increased duration for spells.



Pouch of Trails

Description: Bounty hunters and pilgrims often prize these items above their own safety. *Pouches of trails* range in size from small to very large, but are always fashioned from simple, tanned leather with little or no ornamentation. A simple stone on a thong acts as a clasp. Each pouch feels full, but inside looks empty. Only when a person reaches inside will he find something: a gritty substance that feels much like common road dirt.

Powers: When a handful of this dirt is tossed onto a person's feet, he then can walk without leaving any tracks in the road, the effect lasting for six hours. Enough dirt may be pulled forth to cover up to five people (or two average-sized horses) in a day.

When the dirt from the pouch of trails is spread over a patch of road, the pouch's owner gets a furtive vision of the path's final destination in the direction he stands, along with the whispered name of the end site in his ear. This affect can only be done once, in each direction, to any road. Thus, anyone bearing such a pouch can said to be never truly lost.

Finally, when the dirt is spread on an animal track, the pouch owner will hear faintly the sounds of that creature's passing. This can only be done once per set of tracks.

Eyes of the Frentlin

Description: The small mask called *the eyes of the frentlin* is among the oldest discovered natural magic items. It is fashioned from sinew and delicate feathers and covers only the area around the eyes and nose.

Frentlin were priests of an ancient cult who worshipped a goddess of wind and creatures that soared through the air. Legends say the frentlin died out centuries ago, but these masks sometimes are found as part of lost hoards and treasures.

Powers: The magic of the mask needs a carrier: any bird will do. (A familiar may be used at the game master's discretion.) The wearer stares into its eyes, and a connection is made. The animal receives no save for the contact to be made.

From then on, the wearer can at any time view the world from the bird's eyes. As this change of vision can sometimes be quite severe, the character should be considered stunned for the round he places the eyes over his face. When desired, the wearer can change carriers, but first he must find a new bird before detaching from the old.

The wearer has no innate control over the avian, nor can he speak their language. However, the eyes work as a channel between the two, and any animal sphere spells cast upon the carrier are easier to complete, lowering the bird's save by -2.

There is a danger to the mask: should

the bird be somehow blinded while the wearer is viewing through its eyes, he must make an immediate save vs. spell or be similarly blinded (thus permanent blindness might even ensue).

Bane Toadstool

Description: This item is all too prevalent in wooded areas that have been corrupted. Rumors also place *bane toadstools* amid underground forests of towering fungi. Wherever they are found, most sages agree that they are to be avoided. They possess an evil, almost sentient magic that soon perverts the user, so beware of any small black mushroom that seems to have a vaguely sinister face upon its mottled cap.

Powers: The magic inherent in each toadstool requires that the user grasp it in his bare hands. A person can wear gloves or gauntlets and use its magic. When brandished, all fungoid creatures (myconids, purple fungi, shriekers) will react docilely to the bearer unless attacked. The individual can touch harmful fungi without fear of poison or spores.

In addition, with the *toadstool* one can *putrefy food* at will with only a touch, and *detect poison* in a 20' radius at will. The bearer is offered a +5 on all saves versus poison. The bearer gains a poison touch, causing 3-18 hp damage and a possible 1 hp loss on each round following the touch until a full 18 hp are finally lost. The tar-

get's bare skin/hide must be touched, and it receives a save. If successful only 1-6 points of damage are inflicted. This power can only be used once per day.

Every time a *bane toadstool* is held and used, roll a secret save for the character to see if he becomes infected by the evil magic of the item. Each failed roll leads to a disease, which can be followed by a worse state. All the suffering is cumulative in effects.

The diseases progress thus: *Stage one:* Bearer begins to shun bright light, temporarily losing 1 point of Dexterity and Charisma while exposed. *Stage two:* Bearer turns neutral evil. *Stage three:* Bearer takes damage from daylight, suffering 1 hp per turn of exposure and losing half all Dexterity. *Stage four:* Plant sphere spells cast by the character cannot affect any non-fungoid life. *Stage five:* Bearer begins to grow thread-like mold about person, lowering Charisma by 4 as he turns deathly pale, hair falls out, skin turns pasty, etc. *Stage six:* Bearer finally turns into a fungoid entity much like a myconid.

A *bane toadstool* will always register as evilly aligned and poisonous to divination magic. Ω

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Games Workshop's Warhammer Quest



Yes, it's December, but this is being put together at the end of October, so in honor of Halloween, the focus of the first half of this month's column will be horror.

It is appropriate that this belated Halloween column present the nightmarish issue of frightening (and just downright wierd) miniatures.

The second half of the column is a special Christmas present: an end-of the year look at some of the best the market

has to offer. We invited the miniatures manufacturers to select a favorite from among their currently available figures. Those figures appear as a sort of "Best of" miniatures overview.

The second half isn't a review column *per se* and there isn't a Best of Show selection. This is just a way to display some figures of rare quality, reminding you why we became modelers and painters in the first place.

Have a good holiday.

Reviews

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#0001 Warhammer Quest*

Author: Andy Jones

Scale: 28mm cost: \$59.99

Presentation: 9 Playability: 9 Value: 9

There has always been something irresistible about staggering hither and thither in an unknown dungeon environment, hacking at monsters as they leap from the shadows, and discovering long-forgotten treasures. Warhammer Quest serves as both a reminder to those of us who have been participating in such excursions for many years, and as an initiation to those who are not so lucky as we.

Warhammer Quest allows you to explore mysterious dungeons, randomly designed and populated, or to pre-design the map and influence the population. Each character has special skills that are uniquely his, with equipment to help him along. A hefty role-playing book allows characters to experience life outside the catacomb, spending the gold they find and expanding their knowledge. When played as a board-game, there is no character advancement, but with the role-playing material, characters can become deadlier and deadlier, taking on more difficult tasks.

The game can be deadly, so the adventurers need to work together well, or they might find themselves looking at the inside of a minotaur's belly. A single game can run from half an hour, not including set-up time, to over three hours, depending on the size and nature of the scenario.

Warhammer Quest comes with dozens and dozens of plastic figures, as well as portals to connect rooms to hall sections. Everything you need to play, from dice to map pieces to figures, is included. In addition, there are many new materials supporting the game, from characters to more scenarios, so it will be a while before you run out of things to do.

#9201 Krell, Lord of the Undead

#9185 Lichmaster

Warhammer Fantasy* line

Sculptor: Gary Morley

Scale: 28mm Cost: \$8.50 each

Technical: 8 Artistic: 9 Value: 4

These two deadly characters for your undead Warhammer army are incredibly detailed. A few minor parting lines are visible, but they're not significant. Take a few moments with your needle files and they'll be ready to prime.

Krell is ready to leap into battle, his huge axe poised to send his foes to the afterlife. Layered armor, consisting of chain and plate, protects all of his vital...

organs'? His stance is dramatic, with excellent features and accessories. As a Dark Lord of Nagash, he is an ominous sight on the battlefield.

The Lichmaster, Heinrich Kemmler from the undead army list, is a very powerful necromancer character. He wears an apron of sewn flesh, held by disembodied hands, and a number of skulls adorn his clothing. There is a great deal of detail, including a knotted, gnarled old staff and a skull-shaped lantern, and his cloak is lined with small skull shapes. Either or both will make your fearsome undead army even more terrible.

Rafm Company

20 Parkhill Road, E.
Cambridge, Ontario, Canada N1R 1P2
Voice: (519) 623-4832 Fax: (519) 623-2795
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$4

#2010 Skeleton War Wagon

Sculptor: Bob Murch & Bill Schwarz
Scale: 25mm Cost: \$25
Technical: 6 Artistic: 7 Value: 6

As long as we're discussing undead armies, Rafm's war wagon is a nice addition. You can treat it as a chariot or create workable house rules for the figure.

The wagon pieces have the expected flash along the edges, which will require some time to fix but shouldn't have any impact on the detail. Getting a tight fit will also require a bit of work, but is well worth it. The skeletons and horses, except for the usual minor parting lines, are very clean.

Two nicely-detailed, decomposed horses pull this wagon of battle-hardened (perhaps fossilized?) skeletons. The wood grain and wagon embellishments (shields, skulls, etc.) are very good. The battle standard itself is a number of shorter poles strapped together.

The wagon design is ingenious, and nicely illustrated instructions make assembly easy to follow. A good paint job will make this a great display piece or centerpiece for your army.

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati, OH 45212-1197
Voice: (800) 543-0272 Fax: (513) 631-0028
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$4

#01-505 Dracolich

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® line
Sculptor: Jeffrey P. Wilhelm
Scale: 25mm cost: \$49.95
Technical: 8 Artistic: 9 Value: 10

A limited edition release, like Takhisis and the Great Red Dragon before it, the Dracolich is an incredible piece of superb design and sculpting.

Casting is very good, with parting lines visible only on a couple of the 18 pieces.

Despite the number of pieces, assembly



Games Workshop's Krell, Lord of the Undead, and the Lichmaster



Rafm's Skeleton War Wagon

is surprisingly simple, as the pieces fit very well and require little additional effort. As with any piece of this size, pinning and epoxy is recommended to reinforce the joints and fill any minor gaps.

This impressive figure is based on artwork by Clyde Caldwell. It has an ominous presence. Whether used as a gaming aid or strictly as a display piece, the Dracolich will generate a satisfying reaction from your friends. The wings, with deteriorating tissue clinging to their bony frame-

work, are wonderful. Another highlight of the undead dragon is the spine and attached ribcage, which has excellent detail and near-perfect fit.

I don't often recommend a figure, since gamers and modelers have such varying tastes, but this is a great challenge for any modeler. In addition, the Ral Partha limited editions have a history of selling out quickly and appreciating as collectibles (albeit to a small group of collectors).



Ral Partha's Dracolich

#11-064 Lord Soth

#11-500 Crypt Thing

AD&D® 2nd Edition line

Sculptor: Dennis Mize/Robert Olley

Scale: 25mm cost: \$5.95/2.15

Technical: 7 Artistic: 8 Value: 7

Here're a couple of guys who don't know when to quit; death, apparently, doesn't stop everyone. The infamous Lord Soth, and a less famous cousin, the crypt thing, make a great contrast; with Lord Soth in regal attire and an air of authority and the crypt thing in simple clothing and humble pose.

A few minor parting lines are the only visible casting flaws, and those will clean up easily. One parting line runs through a bit of detail on the mounted Soth's legs, so you need extra care there.

From his heavily embellished armor and helm to the folds of his cape, Soth has a great deal of detail. His horse is also highly detailed, but the proportions are off. The neck is too long and the legs are too short. Once Soth is mounted, though, the neck isn't quite as noticeable.

The crypt thing is a simpler fellow, happy with a headstone and some adventurers to deal with. Ragged clothing and a detailed skull are this figure's claim to fame. The huge headstone will look great after painting, as will both figures. Using a weathered sandstone paint-scheme on the headstone should counter the traditionally drab coloring of the crypt thing.

Grenadier Models

P.O. Box 305

Springfield, PA 19064

Voice: (800) 843-2015 Fax: (610) 623-5980

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$3

#1458 Ultimate Skeletons

#1459 Skeletons with Hand Weapons

Fantasy Warriors* line

Sculptor: Mark Copplesstone

Scale: 25mm Cost: \$6.95 each

Technical: 7 Artistic: 7 Value: 8

Here are two blisters of four skeletons each. These figures are great for any fantasy milieu, from role-playing to miniatures gaming.

Minor mold lines run along the sides of the figures, but the detail of the legs and ribcage are easy enough to maintain when you file away the lines. The sword-wielding skeleton from the Ultimate pack looks as if the sculptor took a hobby knife and cut the closed mouth open. Still, a good paint job will remove any trace. A point of confusion, however, is that one set has round bases and the other set has square.

The Ultimate skeletons are creatively posed, with very nice accessories, like a war horn, battle standard, and *really* toothy grins. These are the perfect command group. The Skeletons with hand weapons still have some shreds of clothing or pieces of armor, as well as animated poses.



Grim Reaper's Dragonman Warrior

Harlequin Miniatures

P.O. Box 50081

Amarillo, TX 79159

Voice: (806) 372-1268 Fax: (806) 372-1361

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#7101 Greater Daemon

#1005 Skeleton Warriors

Fantasy line

Sculptors: Kev White/Chaz Elliot & Roy

Eastland

Scale: 25mm cost: \$10.95/\$5.50

Technical: 7 Artistic: 7 Value: 7

Not your typical daemon, this horrific abomination from the bowels of... actually, being from the bowels of anything sounds pretty distasteful. The quartet of skeletons is pretty imaginative as well.

The daemon needs a little file work to get its four pieces cleanly joined and there are a few visible parting lines. It is highly detailed with scales and tough, wrinkled hide. Its head is a bulbous gourd, somewhat similar to the creature's head in the film *Alien*. Its stance is lively, with a creative curve to the spine.

The skeletons are very clean, with little flash or parting line to speak of. They are well sculpted, with good proportions and realistic structure. Some have comical stances while others take themselves more seriously. The skulls are especially well proportioned and detailed.

Grim Reaper Casting

Clifton Industrial Center
Mill Rd. & N. Sycamore Ave.
Clifton Heights, PA 19018
Voice: (610) 626-8031 Fax: (610) 626-8064
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#1096 Dragonman Warrior

Nasteez* line
Sculptor: Cliff Linton
Scale: 28mm Cost: \$3.00
Technical: 8 Artistic: 7 Value: 6

The Nasteez line has grown rapidly the last couple of years. Because the sculptors are young and rather new to the industry, they have yet to face the dangerous beasts that all artists eventually fight: redundancy and the mainstream. The Nasteez line is filled with original work and a lot of character.

Minor parting lines are visible in a few locations along the edge of the figure. Other than the edge of the shield, no detail is endangered, so clean up is a snap.

The stance and texture of the creature are very good, and the shield will paint up excellently; but the single most impressive feature is the inside of the wings. The texture is wonderful and totally unique.

Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games

1260 E. Woodland Ave.
Springfield, PA 19064
Voice/Fax: (610) 544-9052
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#322 Shadowmant

#331 Despairthought

Earthdawn* line
Sculptor: Phil Lewis
Scale: 25mm Cost: \$4.95/\$3.95
Technical: 9 Artistic: 8 Value: 5

Earthdawn provides an excellent source of strange creatures as yet unknown to gamers, and Heartbreaker didn't waste their opportunity to release some original, intriguing monsters from FASA's RPG. There are only faint traces of parting lines on these figures, so clean-up should take mere moments and you're ready to prime and paint.

The design of the Shadowmant is wonderful, with stinging tail curved over its back like a scorpion and the illusion of flight supported by a rock formation. The pieces fit together very well. A little epoxy will blend over the joint easily.

I don't know what a Despairthought is, but this is a very interesting and creative sculpture.

Painting these figures will be simple and enjoyable, with all that texture working with you.

Best of Show

Modelers' BOS is Ral Partha's Dracolich, a phenomenal piece that presents such a challenge to modelers that they are bound



Ral Partha's Lord Soth (mounted and dismounted) and Crypt Thing



Grenadier Models' Ultimate Skeletons and Skeletons with Handweapons



Harlequin's Greater Daemon and Skeleton Warriors

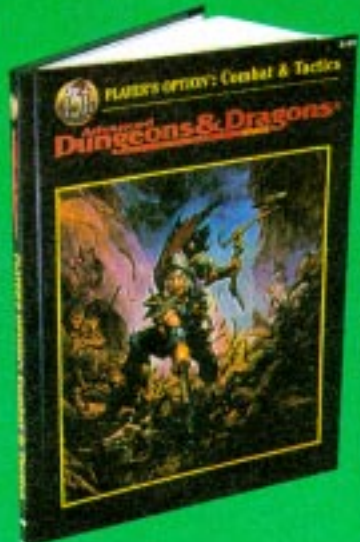
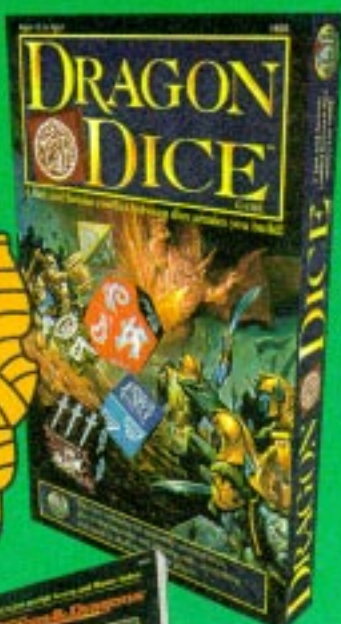
to step up to the task, pushing the limit of their skills.

Gamer's BOS is GW's Lichmaster, winning by a nose (and a few other body parts.) The level of detail shows their designers are a dedicated band of game fiends with a love for their work. A close second are the Heartbreaker pair; very different and interesting.



Continued on page 62

Heartbreaker's Shadowmant and Despairthought



ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, AD&D, DRAGON DICE, PLAYER'S OPTION, FORGOTTEN REALMS, DUNGEON MASTER, MONSTROUS MANUAL, BIRTHRIGHT, DARK SUN, RAVENLOFT, ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA, and the TSR logo are trademarks of TSR, Inc.

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Thunderbolt Mountain's "Rescue"

The Year's Best Miniatures

Now that we've looked at some horrific undead, let's try something lighter.

A number of miniatures manufacturer's were kind enough to select one of their favorite releases. Since this is a Best Of of sorts, the figures aren't reviewed, just presented for your appreciation. Figures like these exist to remind us why we became painters and modelers in the first place.

#1021 Hippogryffe Rescue Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 E. McMillan
Cincinnati, OH 45206 (800) 235-3908
Sculptor: Tom Meier 25mm scale
\$13.95

Hippogryffe Rescue depicts the rescue of Angelica by Roggerio from Aristo's epic poem *Orlando Furioso*. In the miniature scene, Roggerio and his hippogryffe have struck from the skies to snatch Angelica from the choppy waters, just as she was to become lunch for a foul denizen of its depth.

This is one of Tom Meier's favorites because it exemplifies several features he considers important in miniature models: dynamic action, characterization, and technical precision in representation.

#02007 Domur "Hunter's Moon" Reaper Miniatures

P.O. Box 293553
Lewisville, TX 75029 (214) 434-3088
Sculptor: Julie Guthrie 25mm scale
\$1.65

Through methods unknown, Reaper has dragged Julie Guthrie, kicking and screaming no doubt, out of her retirement from 25mm sculpting. Possibly the lure of sculpting for their new Dark Heaven line was too much to resist.



Rafm's Necro Drake



Reaper's Domur

In any case, Domur is an excellent piece. He stands concentrating on his spell book while a conjuration of flame grows from his palm. The mischievous faces in the conflagration apparently don't know who's boss here... or do they?



Grim Reaper's Kreegah the Spoiler

#2014 Necro Drake

Rafm Company
20 Parkhill Rd East
Cambridge, ONT N1R 1P2 (519) 623-4832
Sculptor: Bob Murch 25mm scale
\$34.95

Bob Murch's dragon-lich is an impressive presence.

Tattered wings and bleached bones, the Necro Drake crawls across the landscape, bones rattling a warning to all within earshot. It seeks the life-force necessary to sustain itself... or the means by which to end its existence.

#5108 Kreegah the Spoiler

Grim Reaper Casting

Mill Rd & N. Sycamore Ave.

Clifton Heights, PA 19018 (610) 626-8031

Sculptor: Cliff Linton 25mm scale
\$7.25

Summoned from a distant plane, Kreegah's strange appearance—heavily ribbed torso, dimly glowing eyes, and horribly twisted set of teeth—shook the confidence of, and inspired fear in, the most powerful of summoners. It was rumored that whenever Kreegah was summoned, he destroyed his captor and returned home.

#AX002 AXXE

Mythic Proportions, Ltd.

P.O. Box 1903

Shelton, WA 98584 (360) 426-0104

Sculptors: Erik Pollard and Phillip

Schiefer 25mm scale \$89.95

Perched on the ridge of a rocky mountain, AXXE stood supreme over his domain. Nothing could challenge him: he was death incarnate for his opponents. Only through the gaining of his favor could a lesser creature hope to survive in his realm. So said the stories.

AXXE stands about 16" tall, not including the mountainous base that comes with him. He requires a great deal of assembly and finish work, so he is not for the beginner, but he's well worth the effort, as you can see. AXXE is available by mail order only.

#8599-B Tyrion

Games Workshop/Citadel Miniatures

3431-C Benson Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21227

(401) 644-1400

Sculptor: Jes Goodwin 28mm scale
\$8.50

An aura of elegance and regal stature radiate about the high elf prince, Tyrion. Ladies and lords alike had long admired the presence and power of the prince. Attired for battle, even his armor and weapon were beyond human ken. His steed was a powerful beast, equipped to match his master. The dragon emblem of his birthland, together with the heart symbol of his family, represented power and mercy. Such a combination could rule a land... or a world.

#2015 Orc Shaman

Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games

1260 E. Woodland Ave.

Springfield, PA 19064 (610) 544-9052

Sculptor: Kev Adams 28mm scale
\$2.50

Having poor vision, this sharp-witted orc shaman apparently found himself a seeing-eye-goblin to help him target his powerful magics on enemy units. Possibly an accident in the previous battle taught



Mythic Proportions' AXXE



Games Workshop's Tyrion



Heartbreaker's Orc Shaman

him not to hit his general's unit with nasty magic, or perhaps he just liked having one of the squealing little creatures around.

Kev Adams has done hundreds of orcs in his sculpting career, and we can still see why.

#3303 Giant Grim Reaper

Grenadier Models

P.O. Box 305

Springfield, PA 19064 (610) 623-5780

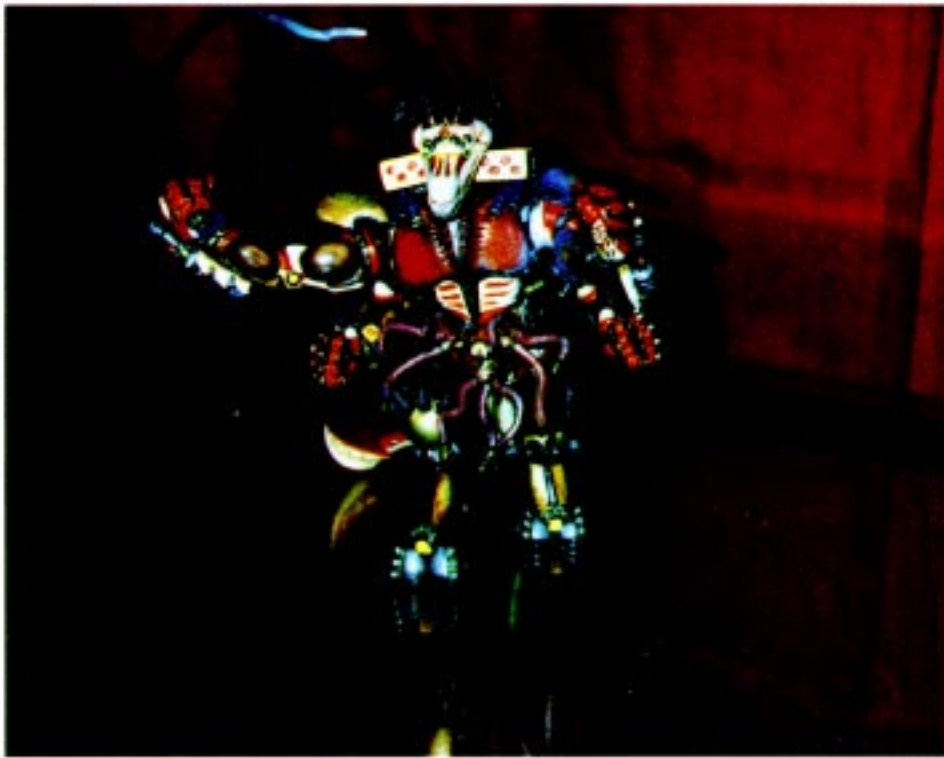
Sculptor: Andrew Chernak 54mm scale
\$19.95

A symbol of mortality, no man need fear him until fate decrees an end to his mortal existence. The sundial at the Reaper's feet shows him the mortal time, indicating those who's time has run out. With a great slash of his scythe, souls separate from their bodies and gather to him. With another, their journey begins toward a final reward. Emotionless, his task is repeated, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment...

Andrew Chernak doesn't often get an opportunity to sculpt nowadays. Pity.



Grenadier's Giant Grim Reaper



Global Games' Archfiend Colossus



Stone Mountain's Legion of the Damned

#RF1786 Klingon

Rawcliffe

155 Public Street

Providence, RI 02903 (401) 331-1645

Sculptor: Julie Guthrie 2½" tall
\$17.50

The quality of these *Star Trek* pieces will raise some eyebrows.

At least we can take solace in the fact that the sculptor is "one of us," as Julie Guthrie's work has appeared in our hobby since I can remember.

#1810 Archfiend Colossus

Global Games

Sculptor: Dave Summers 28mm scale
\$39.95

Designed for its psychological impact as much as its battlefield capacity, one can understand the tales told by troops who have fled before the terror of the



Rawcliffe's Klingon

Archfiend's presence. Those troops who stayed to fight it are unable to tell tales—they forever lay silent in the monster's wake. Carbon and steel, tungsten and iron, the beast may be the menace to give



Ral Partha's Armored Balrog

the self-directed machines, the Legions of Steel, the final advantage.

Between Tom Frank's design and Dave Summers' sculpting, this line just keeps getting better.

#01-081 Armored Balrog

Ral Partha Enterprises

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**GAMES
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A History of the Rod of Seven Parts

by Skip Williams

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

The legendary Rod of Seven Parts is one of the more famous and less understood of all artifacts in AD&D®. It also has one of the longest and most colorful histories.

The Rod's Early Appearances

Back in the mid-1970s fantasy role-playing games (FPRGs) were new; big, thick books full of new magical items and artifacts had not yet appeared on the scene. Heck, published modules hadn't even appeared yet. Dungeon Masters were on their own when it came to filling their worlds with rare and wondrous magical items; it was a time when DMs really had to be inventive.

I don't know who first dreamed up an adventure featuring a multi-part item whose individual pieces could lead the bearer to the other pieces, but one of my early dungeons featured a four-piece staff hidden inside a labyrinthine tangle of twisting passages, deathtraps, and teleporters. Players in my campaign never managed to collect more than three segments of the staff. In any case, I shared the idea with the gaming crowd in Lake Geneva, and the actual Rod appeared shortly thereafter. For all I know, I invented the basic concept.

At the time, a few penciled notes scribbled on index cards contained all the information on the original staff. Here's a more complete version, written especially for readers of *DRAGON*® Magazine:

The Staff of Cynnus

Anyone with a desire to rule, from a benign monarch to the worst despot, covets this unique item, which was crafted ages ago by a mysterious wizard. The staff consists of four ivory rods that join together to form a shaft 6' long. The individual segments are about 18" long and as thick as a thumb. Each segment is capped at both ends with a platinum flange about 2" wide. All the flanges are inscribed with magical glyphs.

The segments radiate strong enchantment/charm and alteration magic. Any

character grasping a segment and uttering the proper command word can command other creatures as the 1st level priest spell command. Each use of this power drains one charge; the segments have 1d20+50 charges when found, but actually can hold 100 charges. It can be recharged.

A second command word causes the segment to show the direction to its nearest companion. If allowed to rotate freely (balanced in the bearer's finger or open palm or left on a smooth surface), the segment points steadily toward its nearest companion, and will continue to so point for a full turn. The glyph on the end pointing toward the next segment glows; if the bearer moves the segment so the glyph no longer points toward the next segment, it stops glowing. Each use of this power consumes two charges. If the bearer grasps the segment so that it cannot turn freely, or uses it to cast a *command* effect, the segment stops pointing, though it can be command to point again.

If the bearer has two or more segments, a third command word allows him to join them together. Joining two segments drains no charges, but the combined item has only as many charges as the individual segment with the fewest charges. Each time a segment is added, the staff gains new powers:

Two segments: beguiling as a *rod of beguiling*. Each use drains one charge.

Three segments: *suggestion*, as the 3rd-level wizard spell.

Four segments: the bearer gains a charisma of 18 (there is no effect if the character already has a charisma score of 18 or better) and can use the staff to create a *mass charm* effect as the 8th-level wizard spell. The bearer also can control animals as a *potion of animal control* (all types of animal are affected). The *mass*

charm and *animal control* powers drain two charges when used. The Charisma improvement drains no charges and operates continuously while the bearer holds the staff.

All powers are cumulative; a character wielding all four segments joined together could command, beguile, mass charm, and control animals, and would have a Charisma of 18. Effects created by a single segment function as though cast by a 6th-level character. As the wielder adds more segments, the casting level goes up for all the staff's powers; two segments function at 8th level, three segments function at 10th level, and four segments function at 12th level. The staff can be recharged no matter what stage of assembly it is in.

XP Value:—

GP Value: 15,000 per segment

Further Developments

The *Eldritch Wizardry* supplement for the original D&D® game gave the Rod of Seven Parts its first official appearance in a TSR product. *Eldritch Wizardry* was a pamphlet-sized softback released in 1976; it was something of a milestone for TSR. The booklet introduced artifacts, denizens of the lower planes, and psionic powers into the game. It also featured a color cover showing a nude woman lying on an altar. It also marked the first time retailers objected to a TSR product. "Send me 12 copies of all your D&D products—except the one with the nude on the cover," one letter read.

The Rod not only had more parts than *The Staff of Cynnus*, you also had to put them together in the right order or all the parts would teleport away. Also, once assembled, there was a 5% chance that Rod would break apart and the pieces would teleport away. Any of the Rod's

pieces, however, could lead a character holding it to other pieces of the *Rod*. As with all the artifacts from *Eldritch Wizardry*, the *Rod* had no specific powers assigned to it. Instead the DM was directed to a set of tables at the back of the book. So, no player could buy the book and find out exactly what the *Rod* did.

When the original *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* arrived in 1979, the *Rod* developed a history. Here, it was first revealed that the *Rod* is an artifact of Law built by the Wind Dukes of Aaqa to aid them in a war against Chaos, where the *Rod* was shattered. The book also contained more detailed rules for assembling the *Rod*, including just how far the pieces teleported away if improperly assembled (100–1,000 miles in random directions). The *Rod*'s exact powers were still determined secretly by the Dungeon Master.

When the AD&D 2nd Edition game came along in 1989, the *Rod* came right along with it. The revised *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* revealed still more about the *Rod*. In the book, we learn that the Wind Dukes used the *Rod* in the battle of Pesh against the Queen of Chaos and her consort, Miska the Wolf-Spider. Supposedly, the *Rod* shattered when it was used to slay Miska. A specific list of suggested powers was given for the first time, but they were only suggestions; DMs were encouraged to change the powers of all artifacts to keep players guessing.

In 1993, *The Book of Artifacts* fleshed out the legend of the *Rod* in some detail. Here we learn that the fully assembled *Rod* is exactly 5' long, and that it becomes more powerful as pieces are added. Some details of the battle of Pesh are included, along with a few notes about how the *Rod* might be destroyed. We also learn that Miska the Wolf-Spider wasn't killed in the battle, just sent through a planar rift. Now, the Queen of Chaos seeks the *Rod* so she can find Miska and have him by her side once again.

The Quest for the Rod

Next August, TSR, Inc. will ship the *Rod of Seven Parts* boxed adventure, which consists of four booklets totaling 208 pages, three full-color poster maps, and six player reference cards. A companion novel will ship a couple of months earlier. I had the pleasure of writing the adventure and working with Doug Niles, the man who wrote the companion novel. The box and the novel, however, are only the most recent installments on a tale that is older than the AD&D game itself.

The Rod of Seven Parts boxed adventure and novel pick up where *The Book of Artifacts* left off, pitting the Queen of Chaos against a band of mortal heroes in a race to locate and assemble the *Rod*.

In preparing the novel and the adventure, Doug Niles and I decided that we would work from a common source, but

we wouldn't necessarily tell the same story. Both products therefore feature essentially the same cast of characters, but the book relates the story of Kip Kayle, a none-too-honest halfling who finds the first segment of the *Rod* and becomes enmeshed in the never-ending struggle between Law and Chaos. The adventure, on the other hand, is all about what happens when the *Rod* surfaces one *your* favorite game world. Both tales, of course, feature the *Rod*, which has been slightly redefined. Game players *beware!* The *Rod* itself holds surprises even for diehards who've read all the previously published game material on it.

The Wind Dukes of Aaqa, or Vaati, as they call themselves, have a presence in both products. They are a proud and noble race of immortals, though their struggles against Chaos have weakened them. They are masters of the element of air. They are androgynous and seldom find need for clothes. A prudish mortal brazen enough to chide them for their lack of attire is likely to get a lecture on the myriad ways clothing creates chaos.

The Queen of Chaos looms in the background during both searches for the *Rod*, though she plays a greater role in the adventure than in the novel. She directs hordes of her tanar'ri servants to harass the heroes. The queen is a titanic lord of the Abyss, standing about 24 feet tall. She has a corpulent humanoid torso that sits atop a mass of squid like lower body that sports a mass of powerful tentacles. Direct confrontations with the queen tend to be short and painful for lesser creatures (such as PCs) who displease her.

Miska the Wolf Spider, the queen's grotesque consort, broods inside a hidden citadel, where a cocoon of pure law holds him prisoner. He is a three-headed monstrosity who yearns to spread chaos through the multiverse once again. Miska is an opponent best avoided, if possible.

The spyder-fiends are a hitherto unknown breed of tanar'ri who serve the queen. The weakest of them are about as smart as a wolf and as large as a pony. The worst of them are geniuses as big as elephants and with a host of magical abilities to soften the opposition before closing in for the kill. The spyder-fiends revere Miska and would like nothing better than to follow him to war once again.

Vaati (Wind Dukes)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	WY
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Collective or Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional to Genius (15-18)
TREASURE:	A (A,W)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1d4

ARMOR CLASS:	5 (per caste and level)
MOVEMENT:	12, FI 12 (A)
HIT DICE:	4 (per caste and level)
THACO:	17 (per caste and level)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 (per caste and level)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	by weapon + Strength bonus
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Resistant to air attacks and magical aging
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (7' tall)
MORALE:	Elite to fearless (13–20)
XP VALUE:	2,000 + 1,000 per level beyond 4th

The Vaati (VAH•tee), or Wind Dukes, are a race of immortals dedicated to Law. Vaati look like statuesque humans. They are tall, muscular, and androgynous. As a rule, they wear no clothing, but usually wear belts or harnesses to carry weapons and equipment. Vaati have smooth, ebony skin, brilliantly white eyes that sparkle with inner light, and velvety black hair (which usually is kept closely shaved).

Vaati speak their own language, which is very rhythmic and melodic. It also contains many complex whistling sounds. A group of vaati talking produce something that sounds more like chanting or wind whispering through the trees than conversation. Vaati adventurers also speak common. When surprised or exited, however, a vaati tends to let out a whistle rather than use an exclamation peculiar to its adopted language.

Aeons ago, the vaati ruled a vast empire spread over several worlds on the Prime Material Plane, with footholds throughout the planes. When war between Law and Chaos erupted, the vaati were nearly annihilated. They survived only by creating the *Rod of Seven Parts* and using it to end the war.

Combat: Vaati are peaceful and prefer to negotiate rather than fight. If pressed into action, or faced with chaotic foes, they display considerable strength and ingenuity in combat.

All vaati have the following spell-like powers usable at will: *control temperature 10' radius*, *dust devil*, *gust of wind*, and *feather fall*. They can fly at a speed of 12 (some vaati fly even faster), although strong head winds reduce their movement by half. They can use their *gust of wind* ability to double their flying movement for one round. Their spell-like powers function at 4th level or at their character level, whichever is higher.

Vaati are immune to all forms of aging and are resistant to attacks based on the element of air. No air elemental creature will attack a vaati or even approach within 5' unless the vaati attacks first. Even then, vaati receive a +2 bonus to all saving throws, Armor Class, and ability checks involving air-based attacks of any kind, and any damage suffered is reduced by –2 die

(minimum of one point of damage per die).

Vaati have infravision with a 90' range and can see through fog, dust, and similar air-based impediments to vision.

If they cannot avoid a fight, vaati usually try to gain a height advantage over their foes. They bombard the enemy with spells and missiles; they also use their *feather fall* ability to foil incoming missile attacks.

More powerful vaati have additional class and spell-like abilities based on their castes, as detailed below. The level ranges given are only typical values, and higher or lower level vaati are possible.

A vaati's flesh is resistant to blows and provides an excellent Armor Class. More powerful vaati have even better Armor Classes. If a vaati wears armor, he receives either the Armor Class bestowed by the armor or his own Armor Class, whichever is better. *Bracers of defense* and other protective items that bestow a fixed Armor Class work the same way. An unarmored vaati wearing a *ring of protection* or a similar item gets the full benefit from the item.

Vaati have a base morale of 13, which improves by one for each level beyond 4th for a maximum of 20 at 11th level.

Habitat/Society: Most of the remaining vaati live in the Valley of Aaqa, a secluded vale ringed with protective mountains. The valley is completely sealed to all means of transit except flight.

Teleportation is ineffective, though there are several gates to the Astral plane. The valley's exact location is a well-kept secret.

The Valley of Aaqa is a well-regulated paradise with a constant temperature of 72 degrees, manicured fields and gardens, and stately pavilions surrounded by exquisite rock gardens. In the entire vale, there is not single blade of grass or leaf out of place. The valley could easily support 10 times more vaati than currently reside there, and most of the pavilions stand empty. Even this last stronghold of the race was depopulated during the war against Chaos.

Vaati society is divided into seven castes. The exact criteria the vaati use to assign castes is unclear to outsiders. All vaati are born into the wergadeam (worker) caste. Sometime after adolescence, a young vaati either joins another caste or remains a wergadeam. In times of need, some members of the wergadeam join other castes where they can be more useful. The other six castes are the houdeam (civil and military leaders, guards, and soldiers), the haikjadeam (teachers, investigators, and lorekeepers), the trygrideam (farmers, animal keepers, and judges), the kheirdeam (physicians and counselors), the vindeam (philosophers, guardians, and advisors), and the bledrudeam (also philosophers, guardians, and advisors).

There is another, unofficial, caste as well: the wendeam, who are wanderers that keep watch over the *Rod of Seven*

Parts and the Queen of Chaos. The wendeam are independent beings and essentially outcasts.

The wergadeam never leave the Valley of Aaqa. The other castes, except for the wendeam, tend to remain in the valley unless sent away to handle some matter of vital interest to the race. The wendeam wander the Prime Material Plane and almost never set foot in the Valley of Aaqa.

The vaati employ no badges or markings to indicate caste. To a vaati, another vaati's caste is immediately obvious.

To most observers, even the most open-minded, vaati seem stuffy and overconcerned with formal rules. They are excruciatingly regular in their personal habits and they have rules governing everything. They are quick to criticize any lapse in etiquette. Very lawful creatures usually are impressed by their behavior, but others find it tiresome.

Ecology: Though fairly large and powerful, vaati eat very little. They seem to exist primarily on air. The Valley of Aaqa, however, produces a wide variety of foods, and the vaati can offer the occasional visitor a sumptuous repast.

Although they can be slain or laid low by disease, vaati are immortal. Most vaati are at least 3,000 years old, and many are much older than that. Vaati birth rates are very low; there are no more than one or two vaati children born in a century. The race probably never will recover from the losses it suffered during the war against Chaos.

Wergadeam

Most vaati belong to this caste. They have Strength scores of 17, giving them a +1 bonus to attack and damage. They are typically armed with staves and knives. If prepared for war, they carry long swords and long bows. They have no special powers beyond those common to all vaati.

Houdeam

The houdeam conduct the vaati's civil and military affairs. They are primarily charged with guarding the Valley of Aaqa and keeping a wary eye on visitors to the valley. During the war against Chaos, the Houdeam formed an elite corps many thousands strong. These were the Captains of Law mentioned in the history of the *Rod of Seven Parts*.

Houdeam are fighters of 5th–14th level (1d10+4). They have Strength scores of 18/77, giving them a +2 attack bonus and a +4 bonus to damage. Their base armor class is 3, and it improves by 2 for every three levels the houdeam has gained beyond 4th. A houdeam is usually armed with a two-handed sword, a long bow, and several daggers. The sword and bow have a +1 enchantment when used by a vaati, and the enchantment improves by one for every three levels the houdeam gains beyond 4th, to a maximum of +4. In the

hands of a non-vaati, the weapons not only lose their enchantment, but also corrode, falling to pieces in 2d6 months. All houdeam are two-handed sword specialists. Even if unarmed, houdeam can make open handed attacks at the standard rate for their fighter levels. These can be resolved as pummeling attacks or as lethal attacks that inflict 1d4+4 points of damage. When making a lethal open hand attack, a houdeam is considered armed (see Chapter 9 of the *PHB*). If the martial arts and weapon mastery rules from the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Combat and Tactics* book are in play, houdeam are considered specialists in martial arts style C and masters with the two-handed sword. They have one step of mastery for every three levels they have gained beyond 4th.

Houdeam have the spell-like powers common to all vaati, and can make their two-handed swords dance (as *swords of dancing*) three times a day. A houdeam typically makes open handed attacks while his sword dances.

Haikjadeam

The haikjadeam serve as record keepers, police, and teachers. During the war against Chaos, the Captains of Law included companies of haikjadeam for use against undead troops. The haikjadeam also were responsible for security and kept a lookout for spies.

Haikjadeam are paladins of 4th–13th level (1d10+3). They have Strength scores of 18/97, giving them a +2 attack bonus and a +5 bonus to damage. Haikjadeam's paladin abilities are skewed toward Law and Chaos, rather than Good and Evil. For example, they have the ability to detect Chaos and their aura of protection is effective against chaotic creatures. They can command or turn undead, depending what action they deem most lawful under the circumstances. Haikjadeam of 9th level and higher can cast spells from the combat, healing, charm, divination and law (from the *Tome of Magic*) spheres.

Haikjadeam have a base Armor Class of 3, which improves by 1 for every two levels the haikjadeam has gained beyond 3rd. Haikjadeam are armed just as the houdeam are, though they do not have weapon mastery, open hand attacks, or the ability to make their swords dance.

In addition to the spell-like abilities available to all vaati, haikjadeam can *reveal truth* and *calm air* three times a day. *Reveal truth* functions as a *dispel magic* spell, but is effective only against illusions and other forms of magical deception. The spell can destroy illusion magic of all kinds, force *polymorphed* or *shape changed* creatures back into their true forms, reveal invisible beings, and so on. If cast directly on a creature, the target must attempt a saving throw vs. spells or be forced to speak only the complete truth for 2d4 rounds. The target can refuse to speak, but evasions of the truth are not possible.

Calm air quiets all forms of wind in a 30' radius around the haikjadeam. All winds, magical or natural, are reduced to gentle breezes. Creatures from the elemental plane of air cannot enter the radius — the circle of calm collapses if deliberately forced against a creature that normally would be hedged out, just as a *protection from evil* spell does. All sound-based attacks are negated within the radius. The effect lasts three rounds per level of the haikjadeam.

Trygrideam

The trygrideam are charged with tending all the plants and animals in the Valley of Aaqa. It is they, and teams of wergadeam working under their direction, who maintain the valley's park-like appearance. The trygrideam also mediate any disputes that might arise between vaati, and pass judgment on visitors who break vaati law.

Trygrideam also secretly keep contact with the wendeam. They are keenly interested in the *Rod of Seven Parts* and the Queen of Chaos, and they stand ready to intervene to keep the *Rod* out of the queen's hands if necessary.

Trygrideam are druids of 4th-13th level (1d10 +3). They have Strength scores of 16, giving them a +1 bonus to damage. Trygrideam have full druidic abilities and can cast spells from the sphere of Law in addition to the spheres normally allowed to druids. Trygrideam have a base Armor Class of 3, which improves by 1 for every two levels the trygrideam has gained beyond 3rd. They carry druidical weapons, but favor staves.

Despite their lawful alignment, trygrideam follow the druidical ethos as explained in the *Player's Handbook*. They differ from other druids in that they view nature and see proof of a universal order, not a cyclical reality. To them, order is the natural state of the universe and Chaos upsets that order, bringing destruction.

In addition to their druidical abilities and the spell-like abilities common to all vaati, trygrideam can use the following powers three times a day: *solid fog*, *cloudkill*, and *calm air* (see above). Once per hour, a Trygrideam can summon a *vortex blade*. A *vortex blade* is similar to the magical weapon created by the 2nd level priest spell *flame blade* except that it is a blast of high-pressure air that inflicts 1d4+6 points of damage. It has no effect on air elemental creatures, and inflicts double damage (2d4+12) on earth-based creatures.

Once a day, a trygrideam of 8th level or higher can summon one to seven powerful whirlwinds. Each whirlwind is seven feet tall and three feet wide at the top. They fly at a speed of 21 (MC A), have a THAC0 of 10, 30 hit points, and their creator's armor class. They attack once a round for 4d4 points of damage. The creator can direct the whirlwinds at any distance as long as he keeps them in sight. Controlling the whirlwinds requires mini-

mal concentration. Damage to the creator does not dispel the whirlwinds, but the creator can take no action other than movement while controlling them. If the creator is killed or loses consciousness, the whirlwinds dissipate. A whirlwind can freely attack gaseous creatures; it can also disperse magical clouds. Magical clouds with instantaneous durations, such as green dragon breath, are unaffected. Permanent clouds are dispersed only as long as the whirlwind remains in their areas of effect. If skimming along the ground in an area covered with fine dirt, sand, dust, ash, or the like, a whirlwind picks up the loose material, creating an opaque cloud with a 15' radius. Creatures caught in the cloud are blinded while they remain inside and for one round after they leave.

Kheirdeam

The kheirdeam are the vaati's physicians and spiritual counselors. They tend other vaati the way the trygrideam tend the animals and plants in the Valley of Aaqa. During the war against Chaos, the kheirdeam formed a medical corps that cared for the wounded and acted as reserve troops.

Kheirdeam are clerics of 5th–14th level (1d10+4). They have Strength scores of 16, giving them a +1 bonus to damage. Kheirdeam can cast spells from the sphere of Law and all spells in the elemental sphere that involve air (*air walk*, *cloud of purification*, *conjure air elemental*, *dismiss air elemental*, and *wind walk*) in addition to the spheres normally allowed to clerics. Kheirdeam have a base Armor Class of 3, which improves by 1 for every two levels the trygrideam has gained beyond 3rd. They carry clerical weapons, but favor staves.

In addition to their clerical abilities and the spell-like abilities common to all vaati, kheirdeam can *reveal truth* and *calm air* three times a day as the haikjadeam do. They can command or turn undead, depending what action they deem most lawful under the circumstances.

Vindeam and Bledrudeam

These two castes are the vaati's wizards. When not busy casting spells, they function as scholars, philosophers, and advisors. In the war against Chaos they served as support troops and magical artillery. Today, they stand ready to defend the Valley of Aaqa. They also conduct most of the vaati's business outside the valley, serving as ambassadors and troubleshooters.

Vindeam and bledrudeam are wizards of 4th–13th level (1d10+3). They have Strength scores of 15.

Vindeam specialize in spells involving the element air or gas. If the optional elemental schools from the *Tome of Magic* are in play, Vindeam have all the benefits and restrictions of air elemental specialists.

Bledrudeam are abjuration specialists,

as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Vindeam and bledrudeam are Armor Class 4; their armor does not improve as they increase in level. They carry wizard weapons, but favor staves.

In addition to the spell-like abilities common to all vaati, vindeam can cast *solid fog* and *cloudkill* once a day and can summon whirlwinds three times a day as trygrideam can.

Bledrudeam have the spell-like powers common to all vaati and can cast *spell turning* once a day. They can also cast *reveal truth* and *calm air* three times a day as haikjadeam can.

Wendeam

The wendeam are a handful of wandering vaati descended from the Captain of Law who scattered the pieces of *Rod of Seven Parts* at the battle of Pesh and pursued Miska the Wolf-spider through the planar rift, as described in the history of the *Rod*.

Because they devote all their energies to tracking the *Rod* as it moves from world to world, other vaati see the wendeam as renegades and outcasts; only the trygrideam truly understand how valuable the wendeam's efforts are.

Wendeam are rangers of 4th–13th level (1d10+3). They have Strength scores of 18/97, giving them a +2 attack bonus and a +5 bonus to damage. The wendeam's long struggle against the Queen of Chaos has made them lawful good (which does nothing to improve their reputation among other vaati). They have the normal ranger abilities, and their species enemy is spyder-fiends.

Wendeam have a base Armor Class of 3, which improves by 1 for every two levels the wendeam has gained beyond 3rd. Wendeam prefer lightweight weapons. Most carry long bows, darts, a dagger, and two short swords. They take full advantage of their ranger abilities and use a melee weapon in each hand when unarmored. Wendeam usually have at least one enchanted melee weapon of +1 or greater. Wendeam of 6th level or higher have a +1 weapon of some type and a 60% chance for another weapon of +2 or better. Wendeam of 10th level or higher have one or two +1 weapons and a 60% chance for another weapon of +3 or better.

Wendeam weapons are standard magical items that do not become nonmagical or corrode if separated from their owners.

Wendeam have all the spell-like powers common to all vaati. In addition, they can follow any teleporting creature if they can find its tracks, just as a hound of law can. When following a teleporting creature, a wendeam can carry 250 pounds of additional weight, plus an extra 150 pounds for each level the wendeam has attained beyond 10th.

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Am I really ready to commit?

The DRAGONLANCE® Saga consists of almost 60 novels and anthologies now, with more on the way, plus nearly 40 additional game-related titles. Where's a reader to start?

TSR's book department recommends beginning your reading with the *Chronicles Trilogy*, by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. Set during the tumultuous War of the Lance, this trilogy started it all. Then, move on to Weis and Hickman's second trilogy, called *Legends*, for the continuing adventures of the Heroes of the Lance.

So far, so good: You're reading the DRAGONLANCE Saga novels in the order of publication. But here's where the confusion sets in. Subsequent novels take place after, before, and during the events in these first six books.

Where do you go now?

Some readers like to cover one area of interest at a time. For instance, if you like elves, you might read the *Elven Nations* trilogy next, followed by *The Kagonesti* and *The Dargonesti*. Other readers want to experience the Saga in order of publication. The appendix to *The History of DRAGONLANCE* book offers a chart outlining the Saga's publishing history.

For those of you who like to read in strict chronological order, the following is a never-before published list of the DRAGONLANCE Saga books, games, and stories dated according to the Timeline of Krynn. Although some dates are only approximate, this list is a handy guide to experiencing the Saga in a whole new way.

Title	Author	Product*	Date**
<i>The Irda</i>	Linda P. Baker	Novel	6320-5980 PC
<i>The Kagonesti</i>	Douglas Niles	Novel	3811 PC-79 AC
<i>Covenant of the Forge</i>	Dan Parkinson	Novel	2689 PC
<i>Hammer and Axe</i>	Dan Parkinson	Novel	2596 PC
<i>Firstborn</i>	Paul B. Thompson & Tonya R. Carter	Novel	2308-2192 PC
<i>The Kinslayer War</i>	Douglas Niles	Novel	2192—2140 PC
"The Best"	Margaret Weis	Story (Dragons)	2132 PC
<i>The Swordsheath Scroll</i>	Dan Parkinson	Novel	2111—2068 PC
<i>The Qualinesti</i>	Paul B. Thompson & Tonya R. Carter	Novel	2000—1892 PC
<i>The Dargonesti</i>	Paul B. Thompson & Tonya Cook	Novel	1793 PC
"Night of Falling Stars"	Nancy Varian	Story (Dragons)	1435 PC

Title	Author	Product*	Date**
"Easy Pickings"	Douglas Niles	Story (Dragons)	1021 PC
<i>The Legend of Huma</i>	Richard A. Knaak	Novel	1020—1018 PC
"Silver and Steel"	Kevin Stein	Story (Tales 3)	1018 PC
"Kaz and the Dragon's Children"	Richard A. Knaak	Story (Dragons)	1015 PC
<i>Kaz the Minotaur</i>	Richard A. Knaak	Novel	1014 PC
<i>Knights of the Crown</i>	Roland Green	Novel	891 PC
<i>Knights of the Sword</i>	Roland Green	Novel	881 PC
"The Three Lives of Horgan Oxthral"	Douglas Niles	Story (II Tales 1)	117—7 PC
"The Goblin's Wish"	Roger E. Moore	Story (II Tales 1)	92 PC
"Filling the Empty Places"	Nancy Varian Berberick	Story (II Tales 1)	89 PC
"Kender Stew"	Nick O'Donohoe	Story (II Tales 1)	18 PC
"Colors of Belief"	Richard A. Knaak	Story (II Tales 1)	13 PC
"Six Songs for the Temple of Istar"	Michael Williams	Poems (11 Tales 1)	6PC
<i>The Dark Queen</i>	Tina Daniell	Novel	3 PC—97 AC
"Off Day"	Dan Parkinson	Story (II Tales 1)	1 PC
"The Silken Threads"	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Story (II Tales 1)	1 PC
"True Knight"	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Story (II Tales 2)	1 PC—0
"Ogre Unaware"	Dan Parkinson	Story (II Tales 2)	0
"The Voyage of the Sunchaser"	Paul B. Thompson & Tonya R. Carter	Story (II Tales 2)	0
"Into Shadow, Into Light"	Richard A. Knaak	Story (II Tales 2)	0—1 AC
"No Gods, No Heroes"	Nick O'Donohoe	Story (II Tales 2)	2AC
"Seekers"	Todd Fahnestock	Story (II Tales 2)	3AC
"The Word and the Silence"	Michael Williams	Story (II Tales 2)	17—18 AC
"A Good Knight's Tale"	Harold Bakst	Story (Tales 3)	19 AC
"The Cobbler's Son"	Roger E. Moore	Story (II Tales 2)	22 AC
<i>War of the Twins</i>	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novel	39 AC / 357 AC
"Mark of the Flame, Mark of the Word"	Michael and Teri Williams	Story (II Tales 2)	44 AC
"The Night Wolf"	Nancy Varian Berberick	Story (II Tales 3)	50 AC
"The Bargain Driver"	Mark Anthony	Story (II Tales 2)	56 AC
"The High Priest of Halcyon"	Douglas Niles	Story (II Tales 2)	100 AC
"The Wizard's Spectacles"	Morris Simon	Story (Tales 2)	127 AC
"Seven Hymns of the Dragon"	Michael Williams	Poems (Dragons)	143 AC
"Dragon Breath"	Nick O'Donohoe	Story (Dragons)	148 AC
"A Painter's Vision"	Barbara and Scott Siegel	Story (Tales 3)	172 AC / 2800 PC
<i>Weasel's Luck</i>	Michael Williams	Novel	228 AC
<i>Galen Beknighted</i>	Michael Williams	Novel	230 AC
<i>Kindred Spirits</i>	Mark Anthony & Ellen Porath	Novel	258—308 AC
<i>Hederick the Theocrat</i>	Ellen Dodge Severson	Novel	292—349 AC
<i>Before the Mask</i>	Michael and Teri Williams	Novel	313—342 AC
"Harvests"	Nancy Varian Berberick	Story (Tales 1)	323 AC
<i>Night of the Eye</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Novel	323 AC
<i>Dark Heart</i>	Tina Daniell	Novel	323—342 AC
<i>The Black Wing</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Novel	325—351 AC
<i>The Medusa Plague</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Novel	326 AC
"A Stone's Throw Away"	Roger E. Moore	Story (Tales 1)	329 / 342 AC
<i>The Seventh Sentinel</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Novel	330 AC
<i>Wanderlust</i>	Mary Kirchoff & Steve Winter	Novel	331 AC
<i>Emperor of Ansalon</i>	Douglas Niles	Novel	332—340 AC



Title	Author	Product*	Date**
"Hide and Go Seek"	Nancy Varian Berberick	Story (Tales 3)	337 AC
<i>The Gates of Thorbardin</i>	Dan Parkinson	Novel	339 AC
"The Exiles"	Paul B. Thompson & Tonya R. Carter	Story (Tales 3)	339 AC
<i>The Oath and the Measure</i>	Michael Williams	Novel	339 AC
<i>Book of Lairs</i>	Skip Williams and Nicky D. Rea	Adventure	342 AC
<i>Steel and Stone</i>	Ellen Porath	Novel	343—345 AC
<i>Maqesta Kar-Thon</i>	Tina Daniell	Novel	344 AC
"Snowsong"	Nancy Varian Berberick	Story (Tales 2)	344 AC
"Hearth Cat and Winter Wren"	Nancy Varian Berberick	Story (Tales 2)	344 AC
<i>The Companions</i>	Tina Daniell	Novel	345—346 AC
<i>Tanis, the Shadow Years</i>	Barbara and Scott Siegel	Novel	346 AC
"The Test of the Twins"	Margaret Weis	Story (Tales 1)	346 AC
"Raistlin and the Knight of Solamnia"	Margaret Weis	Story (II Tales 3)	346 AC
<i>Darkness and Light</i>	Paul B. Thompson & Tonya R. Carter	Novel	346—347 AC
"Raistlin's Daughter"	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novella (Tales 3)	346—347 AC
<i>Brothers Majere</i>	Kevin Stein	Novel	346—347 AC
<i>Kendermore</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Novel	346—347 AC
<i>Flint the King</i>	Mary Kirchoff & Douglas Niles	Novel	346—349 AC
"Love and Ale"	Nick O'Donohoe	Story (Tales 1)	348 AC
"Riverwind and the Crystal Staff"	Michael Williams	Poem (Tales 1)	348 AC
"War Machines"	Nick O'Donohoe	Story (II Tales 3)	348 AC
<i>New Beginnings</i>	Mark Acres	Adventure (DLS1)	348 AC
<i>Dragon Dawn</i>	Deborah Christian	Adventure (DLA1)	348 AC
<i>Stormblade</i>	Nancy Varian Berberick	Novel	348—352 AC
<i>Mists of Krynn</i>	Various	Adventure (DL15)	348—354 AC
"Heart of Goldmoon"	Laura Hickman & Kate Novak	Story (Tales 3)	349 AC
<i>Dragon Knight</i>	Rick Swan	Adventure (DLA2)	349 AC
<i>Dragon Rest</i>	Rick Swan	Adventure (DLA3)	349 AC
"Clockwork Hero"	Jeff Grubb	Story (II Tales 3)	350 AC
"The Hand that Feeds"	Richard A. Knaak	Story (II Tales 3)	350 AC
<i>Riverwind the Plainsman</i>	Paul B. Thompson & Tonya R. Carter	Novel	350—351 AC
"A Shaggy Dog's Tail"	Danny Peary	Story (Tales 2)	351 AC
"By the Measure"	Richard A. Knaak	Story (Tales 3)	351 AC
"The Promised Place"	Dan Parkinson	Story (II Tales 3)	351 AC
"The First Dragonarmy Bridging Company"	Don Perrin	Story (Dragons)	351 AC
"Into the Light"	Linda P. Baker	Story (Dragons)	351 AC
"Dagger-Flight"	Nick O'Donohoe	Story (Tales 2)	Fall 351 AC
"Hunting Destiny"	Nick O'Donohoe	Story (Tales 3)	Fall 351 AC
<i>Dragons of Autumn Twilight</i>	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novel	Fall 351 AC
<i>Dragons of Despair</i>	Tracy Hickman	Adventure (DL1)	Fall 351 AC
<i>Dragons of Flame</i>	Douglas Niles	Adventure (DL2)	Fall 351 AC
<i>Dragons of Mystery</i>	Michael Dobson	Adventure (DL5)	351—352 AC
<i>Dragons of Glory</i>	Douglas Niles & Tracy Hickman	Adventure (DL11)	351—353 AC
<i>Dragons of Hope</i>	Tracy Hickman	Adventure (DL3)	Winter 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Desolation</i>	Tracy Hickman & Michael Dobson	Adventure (DL4)	Winter 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Ice</i>	Douglas Niles	Adventure (DL6)	Winter 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Winter</i>	Margaret Weis	Novel	Winter 352 AC

Title	Author	Product*	Date**
<i>Night</i>	& Tracy Hickman		
"Finding the Faith"	Mary Kirchoff	Story (Tales 1)	Winter 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Light</i>	Jeff Grubb	Adventure (DL7)	Spring 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Dreams</i>	Tracy Hickman	Adventure (DL10)	Spring 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Spring Dauning</i>	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novel	Spring 352 AC
"The Blood Sea Monster"	Barbara and Scott Siegel	Story (Tales 1)	Spring 352 AC
"Dreams of Darkness, Dreams of Light"	Warren B. Smith	Story (Tales 1)	Spring 352 AC
"The Storyteller"	Barbara and Scott Siegel	Story (Tales 2)	Spring 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Faith</i>	Harold Johnson & Bruce Heard	Adventure (DL12)	Spring/Sum. 352 AC
<i>Dragons of War</i>	Tracy and Laura Hickman	Adventure (DL8)	Summer 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Deceit</i>	Douglas Niles	Adventure (DL9)	Summer 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Truth</i>	Tracy Hickman	Adventure (DL13)	Fall 352 AC
<i>Dragons of Triumph</i>	Douglas Niles	Adventure (DL14)	Fall 352 AC
"Wayward Children"	Richard A. Knaak	Story (Tales 1)	352 AC
"Lord Toede's Disastrous Hunt"	Harold Bakst	Story (Tales 2)	352 AC
"Lorac"	Michael Williams	Poem (II Tales 3)	352 AC
"The Vingaard Campaign"	Douglas Niles	Story (II Tales 3)	352 AC
<i>Time of the Dragon</i>	David "Zeb" Cook	Accessory	352 AC
"The Middle of Nowhere"	Dan Harnden	Story (Dragons)	352—370 AC
"From the Yearning for War and War's Ending"	Michael Williams	Story (Tales 3)	353 AC
"The Potion Sellers"	Mark Anthony	Story (II Tales 3)	353 AC
<i>Tree Lords</i>	John Terra	Adventure (DLS2)	353 AC
<i>Lord Toede</i>	Jeff Grubb	Novel	353—356 AC
<i>Otherlands</i>	Scott Bennie, Scott Haring, and John Terra	Adventure (DLR1)	354 AC
<i>New Tales: The Land Reborn</i>	John Terra	Adventure (DLT1)	354—358 AC
<i>The World of Krynn</i>	Douglas Niles, Michael Gray, and Harold Johnson	Adventure (DL16)	354—358 AC
<i>Time of the Twins</i>	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman		355 PC/1 PC
"Definitions of Honor"	Richard A. Knaak	Story (Tales 2)	355 AC
"Dead on Target"	Roger E. Moore	Story (II Tales 3)	355 AC
"The Final Touch"	Michael and Teri Williams	Story (Dragons)	355 AC
"Fool's Gold"	Jeff Grubb	Story (Dragons)	355 AC
"Into the Heart of the Story"	Michael Williams	Story (Tales 2)	357 AC
<i>Test of the Twins</i>	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novel	357 AC
<i>Dwarven Kingdoms of Krynn</i>	Douglas Niles	Accessory	357 AC
<i>DRAGONLANCE Adventures</i>	Tracy Hickman & Margaret Weis	Rules	358 AC
<i>In Search of Dragons</i>	Rick Swan	Adventure (DLE1)	358 AC
<i>Dragon Magic</i>	Rick Swan	Adventure (DLE2)	358 AC
<i>Dragon Keep</i>	Rick Swan	Adventure (DLE3)	358 AC
<i>Taladas: The Minotaurs</i>	Colin McComb	Adventure (DLR2)	358 AC
"And Baby Makes Three"	Amy stout	Story (Dragons)	358 AC
"Honor is All"	Mickey Zucker Reichert	Story (Dragons)	359 AC
"Scourge of the Wicked Kendragon"	Janet Pack	Story (Dragons)	359 AC
<i>Atlas of the</i>	Karen Wynn Fonstad	Accessory	359 AC



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RAL PARTHA

Title	Author	Product*	Date**
<i>DRAGONLANCE World</i>			
<i>Wild Elves</i>	Scott Bennie	Adventure (DLS4)	359 AC
<i>Oak Lords</i>	Blake Mobley	Adventure (DLS3)	362 AC
<i>Knight's Sword</i>	Colin McComb with Thomas M. Reid	Adventure (DLQ1)	362 AC
"The Story that Tasslehoff Promised He Would Never, Ever, Ever Tell"	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Story (II Tales 3)	363 AC
<i>Flint's Axe</i>	Tim Beach	Adventure (DLQ2)	365 AC
"A Dragon to the Core"	Roger E. Moore	Story (Dragons)	368 AC
<i>The History of DRAGONLANCE</i>	Ed. Margaret Weis	Compilation	372 AC
"The Hunt"	Kevin Stein	Story (Dragons)	372 AC
<i>Tales of the Lance</i>	Various	Adventure	372 AC
<i>Player's Guide to the DRAGONLANCE Campaign</i>	Various	Adventure	372 AC
<i>Unsung Heroes</i>	Various	Adventure (DLR3)	375 AC
<i>Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home</i>	Ed. Margaret Weis	Compilation	375 AC
"Kitiara's Son"	Margaret Weis	Novella (2nd Gen.)	378 AC
"The Legacy"	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novella (Tales 1)	382 AC

Title	Author	Product*	Date**
"Wanna Bet?"	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novella (Tales 2)	382 AC
"The Sacrifice"	Margaret Weis	Novella (2nd Gen.)	382 AC
<i>Dragons of Summer Flame</i>	Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman	Novel	383 AC

* "Dragons" indicates a story from *The Dragons of Krynn*.

"Tales 1" indicates a story from *The Magic of Krynn*.

"Tales 2" indicates a story from *Kender, Gully Dwarves, and Gnomes*.

"Tales 3" indicates a story from *Love and War*.

"II Tales 1" indicates a story from *The Reign of Istar*.

"II Tales 2" indicates a story from *The Cataclysm*.

"II Tales 3" indicates a story from *The War of the Lance*.

"2nd Gen." indicates a novella that first appeared in *The Second Generation*.

Other abbreviations in this column represent game product reference codes.

**PC stands for pre-Cataclius, or "pre-Cataclysm." AC stands for alt-Cataclius, or "after the Cataclysm," according to the dating system Astinus of Palanthas employed in his *Iconochronos*, or "River of Time."



You can send us news, press releases, announcements, and gossip using the Internet at TSR.mags@genie.geis.com. We welcome your comments at *Rumblings*, *DRAGON*® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

TSR is restructuring the **WINTER FANTASY™ Game Convention** to target game masters, con organizers, and club presidents, as well as players. "This new angle on conventions should help breathe new life into convention attendees, as well as those who run them," states Ken Whitman, TSR's convention coordinator. "This will be the first chance for the most influential people in the industry to really talk about the future of gaming." **WINTER FANTASY 1996** will be held at the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, WI, on February 9-11, 1996.

And speaking of conventions... The 1996 **GEN CON® Game Fair** will once again be held at the MECCA auditorium in Milwaukee, WI from August 8-11. This year's special guest is **Robert Picardo**, the holographic doctor on *Star Trek: Voyager*. And of course, all of your favorite TSR writers and artists will be there also.

Columbia Games, the makers of the **Dixie*** collectible card game will release a new game called **Eagles: Waterloo*** this month. The game plays just like Dixie, with changes to reflect Napoleonic warfare. The cards depict French, British, Dutch, Belgian, Brunswick, and Prussian regiments present during the Waterloo campaign of 1815. There will be three versions of the cards to allow gamers to obtain a complete set while collectors can hunt for the rare cards.

TSR is delighted to present a totally new licensed product from SunsOut, Inc. The new offering is a set of five phone cards featuring TSR's famous fantasy art. The set is limited to 2500 numbered cards and bonus cards are also available. Each card carries 20 minutes and can be used with any type of phone. A complete set of 5 cards costs \$60.

Games Magazine has named TSR's **DRAGON DICE™** the adventure game of the year.

* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.

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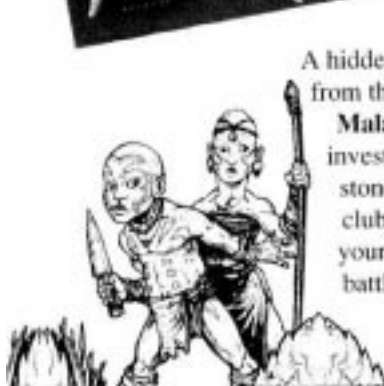
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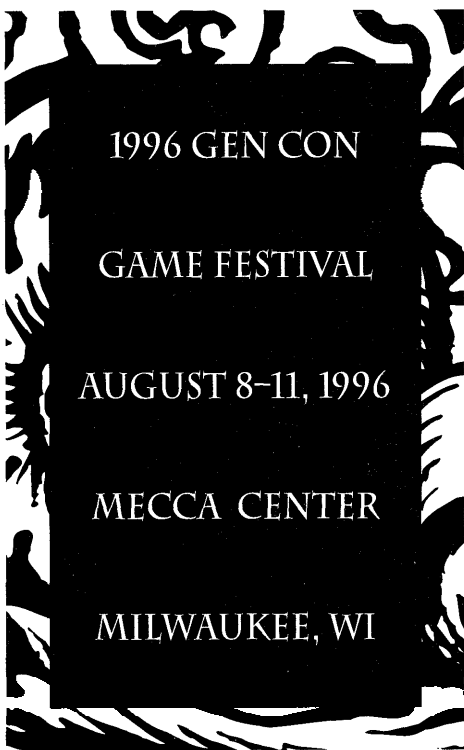
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Convention Calendar

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing or a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, three months prior to the onsale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

Important: DRAGON Magazine does not publish Phone numbers for conventions. Publishing incorrect numbers is always possible and is a nuisance to both the caller and those receiving the misdirected call. Be certain that any address given is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

- ♦ indicates an Australian convention
- * indicates a Canadian convention
- indicates a European convention

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WARP'DCON V, Dec. 2

NJ

This convention will be held at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction and contests. Registration: \$5. Write to: WARP'DCON, c/o Richar DiTullio, P.O. Box 802, C.M. Box 1405, Madison, NJ 07940, or e-mail: rditulli@daniel.drew.edu.

EVENT HORIZON '95, Dec. 29-31

MD

This convention will be held at the Columbia Inn Hotel in Columbia Maryl. Guests include Hal Clement and Sandy Peterson. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, a blood drive, and a masquerade ball. Registration: \$25 preregistered. Write to: EVENT HORIZON '95, Attn. Registration, P.O. Box 1438, Sterling, VA 20164.

GAMES UNIVERSITY, Jan. 5-7

CA

This convention will be held at the Red Lion Hotel in Ontario, Calif. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a sanctioned Magic: the Gathering tournament. Registration: \$20 preregistered before Dec. 31, \$25 on site. Write to: Ultraviolet Productions, P.O. Box 668, Upland, CA 91785.

NECRONCON 10, Jan. 5-7

OH

This convention will be held at the Harley Hotel in Columbus, Ohio. Special guest is Kailen Mitchell. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include demos, workshops, dealers, tournaments, a costume contest, and a con suite. Registration: \$12 preregistered, \$15 on site. Write to: Ravenstone Games, 6825 Flags Center Drive, Columbus, OH 43229.

SUNQUEST '96, Jan. 5-7

FL

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Plaza at The Florida Mall in Orlando, Fla. Guests include Jean Rabe, Tom Prusa, Jackie Cassada, Nicky Rea, Darwin, Peter Bromley, and Ruth Thompson. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events, tournaments, an art show and auction, and charity events. Registration: \$20 preregistered before 11/30/95, \$30 on site. Write to: SUNQUEST '96, P.O. Box 677069, Orlando, FL 32867-7069, or e-mail: onGenie [T.REED10], CompuServe [72337,234], AOL [RFarnsl]

AGOG 9, Jan. 12-14

AZ

This convention will be held at the Tucson Convention Center in Tucson, Ariz. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a raffle, an auction, and a miniature painting contest. Registration: \$10 preregistered before 12/15/95, \$14 on site. Write to: AGOG 9 c/o Gamers Haven, 2241 East Broadway, Tucson, AZ 85719.

CRUSADES '96, Jan. 12-14

CT

This convention will be held at the Comfort Inn of Darien in Darien, Conn. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, a painting contest, and sculpting and painting seminars. Write to: CGC P.O.Box 403, Fairfield, CT 06430 or e-mail: quillup@aol.com.

WRIGHT STATE GAME FAIR, Jan. 13

OH

This convention will be held at the Wright State University Student Union in Dayton, Ohio. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, miniatures painting contests, dealers, artists, movies, and a charity auction. Registration: \$15 on site. Write to: WSU Adventurers Guild, W033 Student Union, Dayton, OH 45435.

LEGENDS & LEGIONS '96, Jan. 13-14

FL

This convention will be held at Collegiate Village Inn in Tallahassee, Fla. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, and a painting contest. Registration: \$10/day and \$15/weekend preregistered before 12/1/95, \$12/day and \$20/weekend thereafter. Write to: nfga-con, 931 Kendall Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32301.

CONSTITUTION IV, Jan. 19-21

MD

This convention will be held at the Best Western Maryland Inn in Laurel, Maryl. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and tournaments. Write to: CONSTITUTION IV, P.O. Box 13607, Silver Spring, MD 20911.

PANDEMONIUM XIII, Jan. 20-21

*

This convention will be held at the Ryerson Polytechnic University/Ryerson Hub Cafeteria in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games.

Registration: \$20 preregistered before 1/5/96, \$25 on site. Write to: Peter Fund, 34-118 Roncesvalles Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6R 2K8, Canada.

ATCON '96, Jan. 26-28

TX

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Austin, Texas. Special guest is Jean Rabe. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events, and a charity auction. Registration: \$15 preregistered for RPGA members, \$12 for GOAT members. Write to: GOAT 3816 South Lamar #2019, Austin, TX 78704.

CREMECON 2, Feb. 2-4

WI

This convention will be held at the Manchester East Hotel & Suites in Glendale, Wisc. Guests include Lawrence Watt-Evans, Sue Wienlein, C.H. Burnett, and Richard Russell. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an art show, a masquerade ball, and workshops. Registration: \$20 preregistered before Jan. 6, \$30 on site, single day rates available. Write to: CREMECON 2, P.O. Box 37986, Milwaukee, WI 53237, or e-mail: cremecon@aol.com.

HURRICON, Feb. 2-4

FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Beach Resort in Ft. Walton, Fla. Guests include Clive Barker, Philip José Farmer, Peter S. Beagle, and Brian LeBlanc. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, and a charity auction to benefit the Red Cross Hurricane Relief Fund. Registration: \$30 preregistered before Jan. 15, \$35 thereafter. Write to: HURRICON, 328 N. Eglin Pkwy., Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32547.

WINTER WAR XXIII, Feb. 2-4

IL

This convention will be held at the Chancellor Hotel in Champaign, Ill. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an auction, and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: \$6 preregistered, \$8 on site. Write to: Donald McKinney, 986 Pomona Drive, Champaign, IL 61821.

MAGNUM OPUS CON-10A, Feb. 15-18

GA

This convention will be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Charlotte, N. Carolina. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, panels, an auction, a lip sync contest, a psychic hot line, and much much more. Write to: MOC-10A P.O. Box 6585, Athens, GA 30604, or e-mail: moc@ix.netcom.com.

PREZCON, Feb. 15-18

VA

This convention will be held at the Best Western Mount Vernon Hotel in Charlottesville, Va. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Registration: \$15 preregistered before Jan. 15, \$20 on site. Write to: Justin Thompson, P.O. Box 4661, Charlottesville, VA 22905.

WAR '96, Feb. 15-18

NC

This convention will be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Charlotte, N. Carolina. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments and prizes. Registration: \$25 for the con and \$50 per game entered. Write to: National Association for Professional Gamers, P.O. Box 6585, Athens, GA 30604, or e-mail: moc@ix.netcom.com.

DUNDRACON XX, Feb. 16-19

CA

This convention will be held at the San Ramon Marriott Hotel in San Ramon, Calif. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, and a flea market. Registration: \$20 preregistered before Dec. 31, \$35 on site. Write to: DUNDRACON, 1145 Talbot St., Albany, CA 94706.

ORCCON 19, Feb. 16-19

CA

This convention will be held at the LA Airport Wyndham Hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a flea market, dealers, and an auction. Registration: \$25 preregistered, \$30 on site. Write to: STRATEGICON 333 N. San Fernando Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 91502.

TOTAL CONFUSION X '96, Feb. 22-25

MA

This convention will be held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlboro, Mass. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dinner theater production and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: \$12/day on site. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 604, North Oxford, MA 01537.

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one Tapper was a surly soul, even for a raven. He had once been a man, but, for some odd reason, the prospect that he might be one again one day did little to improve his disposition. He perched on his companion's thin shoulder and

peered down the valley at the place they had traveled fifty leagues past the Longbone River to reach. He shook his head to clear a red-gold strand from his eyes when a sudden gust caught Marta's unbound hair.

"That is not a temple to Astonei or any other Immortal Power," he said. "That is a hole in the ground."

"Are you forgetting our agreement?" Marta asked. Her tone was deceptively mild.

The raven was quick to demure. "I serve you in all things, as my debt to your late mother and thus to you requires. I try to be as pleasant a servant and companion as you could wish. But fear has a way of smothering that, I am afraid."

Marta nodded. "Me, too. But every portent I can read says that the secret to the Third Law of Power is here. I have only to find it."

"My confidence in you knows no bounds," Bone Tapper said, but Marta ignored him.

They stood beside Marta's cart, just within the shade of the forest, looking out over large grassy valley and across to where a line of cliffs thrust up abruptly from the grassland. At this distance, the temple was just a darker patch near the base of the cliffs, and if Marta did not see as well as the raven, she certainly noticed more. For instance, the broad, beaten path that ran across the valley floor and up to the cave and the small figure trudging along toward the entrance. The faint lines across the top of the cave mouth were recognizable as Westan glyphs even at that distance.

Marta couldn't actually read the glyphs from that far away, but she didn't need to. Astonei was the Immortal Power to which Black Kath's line owed its talent. Knowing the placement of most of her major shrines was simple necessity to those who owed Astonei soul-debt, especially Black Kath's only child.

"We'd best be going," was all Marta said. She unhitched the dappled mare from the wagon and prepared a barrel of water and a good measure of oats for the animal, then hobbled it so it could graze on the grass at the forest's edge without wandering too far.

Bone Tapper ruffled his feathers. "Why leave the wagon here unguarded? Why not just drive to the temple?"

Marta shook her head. "All this valley is holy ground. We walk. Or at least I do. Most of the wards mother placed on her wagon are still there; it's safe enough. The talisman I braided into the horse's mane should keep wolves and such away. If someone decides to steal it—" she looked grim —"they won't keep it long."

"Black Kath's wards might be fading now. I could stay and watch the cart."

"And do what, if it came to doing? Besides, I may need you. Come on."

The Third Law of Power

by Richard Parks

Artwork by Deran Wright

Bone Tapper obediently perched on Marta's shoulder, and together they started down toward the pilgrim trail. By the time they reached the path, the figure Marta had seen from the ridge was well past them. It was easily identified now as a vigorous old woman keeping a smart pace along the trail, her staff preceding each step like a herald. Marta quickened her step just enough to close the distance without appearing to hurry.

"Blessings of the day to you, Good Mother."

The woman turned back to look at them. Her face was lined by the wear of life and more than a little sun. She pulled off her hood to reveal gray hair still carrying a memory of black. She wore her hair long, and tied back with a red cord. She ventured a faint smile. "And to you, child, though in truth it has been many years since anyone called me mother."

"Have you come to visit the shrine?"

"Most certainly, there being precious little else to draw a body's attention hereabouts."

Marta bowed slightly. "Well struck, well deserved. I had assumed as much and was hoping you could tell me something about the shrine. This is not my country."

The woman smiled at her. "I had assumed as much. Folk from as far away as the Longbone come to worship here, but I think you come from farther still."

'Just a bit,' Marta said with great understatement. Torsa was a good six weeks' journey east of the Longbone, though she didn't think of it so much as home now as simply the place where she had been born. Her home would probably be the place where she accumulated enough of the Laws of Power to begin practicing her craft. The same had been true of her mother Black Kath and *her* mother before that. But right now Marta knew only two of the many Laws of Power, and to attempt to serve Astonei with so little was worse than futile—it was suicide.

"What do you want to know?" the old woman asked.

"Does this shrine contain the Oracle of the Basilisk, as I've heard? I come seeking the divination dream."

The old woman wasn't smiling now. "I would speak that name softly if I were you, child. The Oracle is only consulted at great need, and the price for a basilisk dream is high."

"My need is great," Marta said. "And I will pay whatever I am asked."

"The price will be a steep one, I assure you. The priestess of Astonei will take great pains to dissuade the curious and the foolish. You might be asked for more than you can give for the privilege of the oracle."

"I see I was fortunate to meet you today, Good Mother. Your knowledge of the priestess' whims seems very intimate. Even more than intimate, I dare say." Marta waited.

The old woman nodded evident satisfaction. "I can't speak for the quality of your curiosity, but you are certainly no fool. Yes, child. My name is Lornis. For the past forty years I have been Priestess of Astonei, Mistress of the Basilisk Oracle.

Lornis' quarters were in a room off the main entrance to the cave. It looked like a natural opening that had been refined by a mason's hand into a very comfortable space. There was even a serviceable fireplace carved into the stone of one wall, with a working draft. Lornis brewed tea while Marta sat on one of the priestess' chairs, watching her. Bone Tapper had been given free rein of the quarters with Lornis' permission. He flitted from table to chair to mantel to bed, looking at everything with his cold black eyes. He finally lit on Marta's shoulder.

"I trust your friend is satisfied for your safety?"

Lornis asked, not looking up from her preparations. "What is his name?"

"Bone Tapper," Marta said.

Lornis did glance back at her this time. "I mean his real name. He had one before he was changed."

Marta didn't speak. It was Bone Tapper who broke the silence. "Dryas," he said. "As best I can remember." Bone Tapper looked at Marta and shrugged, clearly indicating that he thought denial pointless.

Marta had to agree, but her heart sank a little. She felt no animosity from the woman, but it was never a good idea to reveal too much at first meeting, even among those who might be friends. Lornis had pierced her mask a little too easily, a little too casually, and with apparent unconcern for what it revealed about herself.

'You're an adept, I see,' Marta said.

"The tea is ready." Lornis said. It wasn't an answer, but then Marta hadn't really asked a question. Lornis served the tea in stoneware mugs. She placed one cup and a bit of cake on the mantle for Bone Tapper, then took her place on a willow-work chair across from Marta. "So tell me, Marta, why have you traveled so far to seek the Basilisk Oracle?"

Marta thought of her options, and decided on the truth. "I'm seeking a Law of Power."

Lornis nodded. "I suspected as much. Which one?"

It wasn't idle curiosity, Marta knew. She'd stated the truth, and clearly Lornis wanted all of it. But it went against every instinct Marta had to surrender everything without at least token resistance.

"Why, the next one," she said. Her face was innocence itself.

Lornis smiled. "So be it, child. Just be aware that there is an order to Laws, and learning one out of turn can be worse than not learning it at all."

"My mother said the Laws come in their own time and their own choosing. I think that part is out of my hands at least."

"Most likely," Lornis said. "Your mother is a very wise woman."

Marta looked away. "She was. She died a year ago." She hadn't meant to say it; a sudden painful memory pushed it out. Marta knew it was a mistake, but it was too late.

"Then young as you are, she could not have had enough time to teach you more than fraction of what you need to know," Lornis said, looking thoughtful. "One Law of Power, perhaps two... yes, your eyes

betray you, child. You seek the Third Law."

Marta nodded, beaten. "Yes."

The priestess smiled. "You know so little. For one who owes soul-debt to one of the Immortal Powers, that is a serious matter. So. What have you brought for the offering?"

Marta had wondered how long it would be before they came down to talking terms. She was almost relieved. "What is customary?"

Lornis shrugged. "I decide what is customary, and as I said before, the price is always high—by proportion. A copper or two for the local villagers and the humbler pilgrims. Silver for a scholar, gold for a noble; though both are rare in these parts. You are none of those," she said. "Show me the sign."

Marta looked blank for a moment, then remembered. She reached down the front of her blouse and pulled out a small bronze pendant hanging from a leather thong. It was cast in the shape of a drawn bow. "My mother gave me this when I was a little girl."

"You're little more than that now," Lornis said primly.

Marta kept her tongue with an effort. She was being challenged again, she knew, but she didn't dare respond. Lornis nodded in evident satisfaction and leaned forward. She took the pendant in her hands, examining it carefully. "Novitiate of the Arrow Path, servant of Astonei," she said. "For such there is a special price."

"Which is?"

"Lornis dropped the pendant and sat back, taking a sip of the bitter tea. "Everything," she said.

Marta followed Lornis down a long tunnel. The priestess wore long, black robes that would have made her nearly invisible except for the stars embroidered on the cloth in silver thread. The uneven floor sloped downward. Lornis moved with serene confidence while Marta had to concentrate on her footing, which was hard to do with Bone Tapper riding nervously on her shoulder. Even harder when he leaned toward her ear every few minutes to whisper, "Have you taken leave of your mind?"

Marta bit her lip and kept silent. In a moment, Bone Tapper was distracted by the sight of a large bone embedded in the walls of the tunnel. The marks of a chisel were clearly visible around it as someone had clearly worked to expose as much of it as possible.

"Upper leg bone. And of a very large animal." Since Bone Tapper's ravenhood began, he had become quite the expert on bones, and the sweet bits of carcass still attached to them. A little farther they spied another, then another. Bone Tapper identified each with professional interest. "Lower leg. Right shoulder. Right front paw... oh, consider the length of that claw." Bone Tapper shuddered delicately.

"Were these all from the same animal?" Marta asked.

Bone Tapper shook his head. "At least three. Probably more. And before you ask, no. I don't know what sort of creatures they were. Nothing I've seen living, that's for certain."

The tunnel ended abruptly in a large round room that seemed part cave and part charnel house. The

floor was littered with bones. Bones protruded from the walls. Bones were have sealed in stalagmites or covered with delicate lacework crystals, clear as ice.

"Oh," Marta managed to say.

"These were the Companions of the Basilisk,"

Lornis said. "Like the few in the tunnel, their nature is unknown. So is the basilisk's, for that matter. Truth to tell, it's called a basilisk, but we don't really know that for certain. on this point, Astonei is silent."

Astonei is silent on many things, Marta thought, then quickly suppressed the blasphemy.

Lornis stopped in the center of the chamber, pausing to light two torches mounted on tall stalagmites. "As all things are measured, so are all things given value. The value I give the Oracle is this: Marta, if the Oracle gives you your answer and you have the wisdom to see it, you depart here with what you sought. If you do not, you will remain here as my novitiate. You will surrender the Path of the Arrow for the Path of Solitude and take your place in time as Priestess of Astonei. Swear to this now or depart as you came, with neither honor nor blame."

Not what I came for. Marta took a deep breath. "I swear it," she said. Even as she did so, Marta had the feeling that something was missing from the oath, but her mind was racing ahead to what lay down the far tunnel, and it left mere vague doubts behind quickly.

Bone Tapper shook his head. "I've said this before—"

Marta reached up and pressed Bone Tapper's beak firmly shut.

Lornis left Marta and Bone Tapper along among the Companions of the Basilisk. Marta found a smooth bit of stone and sat down, facing a circle of greater darkness on the far wall. it was the mouth of a tunnel, and the end of it was the basilisk's skull. She looked at it for a moment, then closed her eyes.

"Are you praying?" Bone Tapper asked.

"In a way. I'm thinking."

"About what?"

"About how to recognize a Law of Power."

Bone Tapper shrugged. "You're better off praying. Are you not a follower of Astonei?"

"It's not as simple as that. While the ways of any goddess are a mystery to me, there is one thing I know: Astonei wants the soul-debt paid. Why would it matter to her if I develop my talent on the Arrow Path or quietly serve the Path of Solitude? Both are aspects of her will. It does, however, matter to me how the debt is paid. A great deal. If I pray to know her will, would she have an answer? How can I ask Astonei's help in this without increasing the soul-debt? I'm on my own."

"I see your point," Bone Tapper said dryly.

"Frightening thought though it is."

Marta smiled a grim sort of smile. "As it should be. If I fail, your debt to me is transferred to the Temple along with the cart and the horse and everything else that is mine. In you harbor the illusion that Lornis would be a gentler mistress than I, I think you're mistaken."

"I think you're right. And, since there's nothing I can do about it either way..." Bone Tapper yawned and hopped to the top of a stalagmite. He put his head under his wing.

"You could come with me, you know," she said. "The price serves for two."

Bone Tapper glanced at the tunnel and shuddered. "This is too close to being entombed as it is, so I'll stay here in the relative open if it's all the same to you. I doubt the basilisk has anything to tell me that I'd want to know."

Marta didn't say anything, and in a moment she was certain the raven was asleep. She envied him that skill, often demonstrated, of a quick slumber. She didn't even know if she could sleep now, and sleep was the one thing she had to do.

Marta rose and started down the tunnel. She thought of taking one of the torches with her, but the way was too narrow, and a strong draft blowing through the tunnel was likely to push the flames into her face as not. She moved, half bent-over, feeling her way as she went, using the weak light from the chamber behind her as much as possible. The way grew dimmer until Marta was moving almost completely on feel, when she came to the edge of the tunnel.

Or not quite the end.

Marta's fingers touched smooth stone. The tunnel opened abruptly so that now she could stand to her full height again. There was an opening in the stone, and a faint light from above. Marta glanced up and saw stars.

That explains the breeze.

The tunnel was open to the sky where the shaft ended. The starlight was faint but it was enough to see the pale, ghostly outline surrounding the hole in the wall. It wasn't a new tunnel—it was the basilisk's skull, embedded in solid rock. Marta traced an outline of a horned beak and crest of bone. The opening was its left eye-socket.

"Now what?" she asked. "Do I meditate on a skull locked in stone?"

There was no answer but the soft moan of the wind. Marta shuddered, hugging herself against the chill. She certainly couldn't sleep here—she'd freeze. She reached out to the eye again, feeling the bone of the upper rim, hard and rough now as the stone it had become. Lower down, the rough texture smoothed out, became almost glassy. She smiled.

"Marta, you are a silly bit of fluff, aren't you?" she said ruefully.

Marta crawled inside the basilisk's eye. There was plenty of room, and once inside she found herself passing through a smaller hole where the inner bone had fractured. Now Marta was in true darkness, feeling her way through a space larger than she expected but still fairly close. It felt more like being shut in a box than being in an open room. Marta felt the walls closing in on her in a way she had not felt any time before within the temple. She mastered an attack of panic through sheer will and forced herself to breathe slowly and deeply until the feeling abated. She stretched out

her hands again, taking the true measure of the inside of the basilisk's skull.

The interior measured about seven feet long, almost as much wide, and about four feet high. There was no draft in it; the air was mostly still, and slightly warmer than in the fissure outside. The surface where she rested was slightly curved, like the bottom of a bowl. It was almost comfortable.

Marta nestled down into the curve of the skull like someone settling into a hammock. She didn't get to sleep quickly—her mind was too noisy a place to allow that—but she managed it at last.

"Hurry up! She's waiting!"

Bone Tapper pecked Marta back to awareness. She was not in the basilisk's skull now. She sat with her back to one of the stalagmites in the Hall of Companions, with Bone Tapper perched on her shoulder and pecking her none-too-gently on the head. It didn't seem such a strange thing for him to be doing. What was strange was why she was there in the first place.

"How did I get here?"

"I assume your mother had carnal relations. It's the usual way. No time for this nonsense." Bone Tapper left her shoulder as she struggled to her feet. "She's waiting for you," he repeated.

"Who is? Lornis?"

But Bone Tapper was already gone. Marta heard his croaking call echo from the tunnel leading back to the main hall of the temple. "Hurry!"

Marta didn't understand what all the rush was about. If she'd returned from the Basilisk's skull, she had done it without any oracle or dream that she could recall, never mind that she couldn't remember returning to the hall, either. She had failed—that was what mattered. Marta followed Bone Tapper up the tunnel.

This time the tunnel opened on Lornis' private quarters.

This isn't right. . .

Marta knew the tunnel from the Hall of Companions didn't lead to Lornis' chambers, but this time it did. Marta was certain it was the same room, but now it was very different, quite changed. The chairs Marta remembered were not present; the crystals on the mantle had been replaced by dried herbs in bundles; and even the bed covering and fireplace tools were different.

Bone Tapper perched on a peg by the doorway. "Will you hurry? You have no time to waste!" Then he was gone again, flying out the door and toward the main audience chamber. Marta started to follow because she didn't know what else to do, but she was certainly in no hurry to admit defeat. She paused to glance into a mirror hanging on the near wall, one of the few furnishings that hadn't changed.

I must look a fright.

Marta stopped. She didn't look a fright; she looked like someone else. A woman maybe a year or two older than she, no more than that. A woman with long dark

hair and rich clothes, and a face of casual authority. There was something familiar about the face, but Marta couldn't place it. She examined the clothes in the mirror, then looked down and saw the same fine robes in place of her own blouse and breeches, and soft cloth shoes instead of her own sturdy leather boots.

"Who are you?" she asked aloud; then she felt talons on her shoulders, impossibly strong. Bone Tapper perched on her shoulder, grinning. Marta knew that a raven couldn't grin, but Bone Tapper was doing it anyway.

"You will come to the audience hall. Now."

Marta was too stunned and confused to protest, or do much of anything except move as the raven directed her. She went out the door and followed the tunnel to the audience hall. Lornis was already there. Except, of course, it was not Lornis.

The woman was very old. The ceremonial robes of a priestess of Astonei hung off her body like clothes on storage pegs. Bone Tapper didn't release his painful grip until Marta marched herself before the dais and bowed to the seated priestess.

"Have you found what you were searching for?" the woman asked

"No, priestess, I have not." It was true enough, but why did the words feel so empty, as if she were speaking lines from some unknown play? And why did her voice sound so strange? With a little thought, Marta to the answer to that part, at least.

Because here, now, I am not Marta. But who am I?

"Then by your own word and the goddess' price, you now belong to the Basilisk Oracle. Have you anything to say?"

"Just that I will serve, as my word has bound me. May I please Astonei."

"So..."

Marta shivered, and the words seemed to fall away from her like echoes across an impossible gulf.

"...be..."

Not impossible. She was there. Had been there...
...it."

Marta shivered again, and the stone against her back felt as if it were set with a thousand needles. In a moment, she was fully awake and back in the darkness of the basilisk's skull. The dream was over.

Marta did not go back to Lornis' quarters this time, but she did find a mirror along one of the tunnels near the baths. She looked into it for a good, long time, but all she saw was herself.

"Vanity doesn't suit you. Where have you been?" Bone Tapper lit on her shoulder. Marta winced instinctively, but the raven's grip was no worse than usual.

"I could ask the same of you. You weren't in the Hall of Companions when I returned."

"A hole in the ground is no place for a raven. I went out to get some air. Come along, Lornis is waiting for you in the audience chamber."

"Aren't you going to tell me to hurry?" Marta asked, but the raven just blinked at her, uncomprehending.

Marta sighed. "Let's not keep her waiting."

"What did you find?" Bone Tapper asked, trying to sound unconcerned and not quite managing.

"I'm not sure yet. But I can't wait to find out."

Bone Tapper had no reply. He rode her shoulder into the audience chamber, as vast and grand as Marta remembered it, only now it was Lornis who was sitting in the high priestess' chair on the dais. Marta stopped suddenly as the shock of recognition hit her.

It had been Lornis in the mirror. Much younger, but it was her. *Of course! I should have known.*

"Have you found what you sought?" Lornis asked. Her voice seemed to fill the chamber.

Marta looked at her for several long moments. 'You came to the temple for an oracle dream many years ago,' she said. 'You took the place of the high priestess.'

'Yes,' Lornis said, frowning. 'You haven't answered my question.'

'You're not an adept,' Marta said, as if she hadn't heard. 'You recognized Bone Tapper by simple intuition. The signs are there for anyone with wit to read them. I'm so used to Bone Tapper as what he is that I no longer see them.'

Lornis' smile was all teeth. "I never said I was an adept, child. You did."

Marta nodded. "I did. I went beyond the respect that is your due. I gave you power you did not have."

"The Second Law, child: 'What cannot be taken, cannot be given.'"

Marta shook her head slowly. "A misinterpretation of the Second Law, which really has more to do with the limits of pure force. Force had nothing to do with this."

Lornis' face was as a dark cloud considering a storm. "Did you find what you sought?"

"Yes," Marta said. "I did."

Lornis looked skeptical. "Then, what is the Third Law of Power?"

"I can't tell you."

"You mean you don't know."

"I mean," Marta replied firmly, that you don't. I can't tell you because it would mean nothing to you. I can't tell you because many years ago, you came here searching for the Third Law as I did and you didn't find it."

Lornis was silent for several long moments. 'You're wrong.'

There was a seed of doubt in Marta's mind, but it didn't grow. "I don't think so," she said.

Lornis looked weary beyond her years, but she managed a smile. "Well, about part of it anyway. I did find the Third Law. And when I came to stand before Delaset, my old mistress, as you stand before me now, I told her I had not."

Marta blinked. She struck down the denial forming on her lips; she had only to look at the old woman to know she spoke the truth. "But... why?"

"The Arrow Path may be all to you, child, but for me it was a mistake. I was weary of the traveling, of the searching, long before I came to the Basilisk Temple. And here I found a very weary, very ancient priestess

with a settled life and a high office, and both looked very good to me. All I had to do to make it mine was one little lie. So that's my soul-debt to Astonei. It'll be paid soon enough. I have a better offer for you, Marta. Stay with me. You won't even need to lie. It could be your choice."

Marta shook her head. "You are a fine servant of Astonei. I think your choice to stay served a greater truth than the lie you hid to preserve that choice. But if I tried to stay, that would be the lie, and would not serve Astonei at all. Or you. Or me."

"If I had been as wise at your age," Lornis said, "I would have come to the Temple straight-away and saved poor Delaset a great deal of aggravation. I'm sure she knew it all along."

Marta bowed. "Shall I tell you the Third Law?"

Lornis shook her head. "No need. Go in peace."

"That was quick thinking," Bone Tapper said, and it was the first thing he'd said since they had taken their leave of the temple.

"What was?" Marta asked, brushing the mare in preparation to hitching it up again.

"That story about finding the Third Law, of course. You were convincing, I must say. So was she. I'd swear Lornis actually had found her Law and just chose to stay, as she said."

"She did. And she did."

Bone Tapper blinked owlishly. "She could have been pretending, just as you could have... and I thought you were. How could you know otherwise?"

"If I had actually failed, I would have stayed. I would have had to. Lornis knew that."

"I repeat: How?"

"If I still believed that Lornis was an adept at the end of the oracle, it would mean that I had not found the Third Law. And if I believed that about her, subterfuge would have been out of the question. I would have obeyed, and it would be no more that my own perception of Lornis' power that kept me in line. The oath I took in the Hall of Companions was not to

Astonei."

"What about your honesty?"

Marta almost laughed. "Now you talk out of the other side of your beak, Bone Tapper. First you assumed we were both lying."

Bone Tapper ruffled his feathers. "Fine. I give you that one. But what did finding or not finding the Third Law have to do with knowing that Lornis wasn't an adept?"

"My oracle let me live a piece of Lornis' life, enough to suspect. I had assumed that Lornis was an adept because I didn't consider the other option. Which is, that she merely *appeared* to be. That her experience and natural intuition allowed her to seem more than she was. But if you always accept what you see, at face value, how can you distinguish between it and the truth?"

Bone Tapper thought. "I don't think you can."

"And at that point it no longer matters. 'The appearance of power, once accepted, is power itself.'"

"The Third Law," Bone Tapper said, musingly.

"Assume what you will," Marta said sweetly. "I'll say no more on the matter."

Bone Tapper took his place on Marta's shoulder and she steered the wagon back the way they had come. "And how has this knowledge increased your abilities?"

"It allowed me to escape from the temple, didn't it?"

"There was nothing holding you there."

"I believe that was the point," Marta replied dryly, then she smiled. "After our time in the earth, I fancy a bit of sun. Have you ever been to Lyrksa on the coast?"

The raven shrugged. "No, but then, most destinations are the same to me."

"Not to me. I hope my destinations will always be different than one another. It's the path I won't change."

Marta knew the hunt for the Fourth Law had already begun, but for now she was in no hurry. She let the cart horse set its own pace toward magic.

Ω



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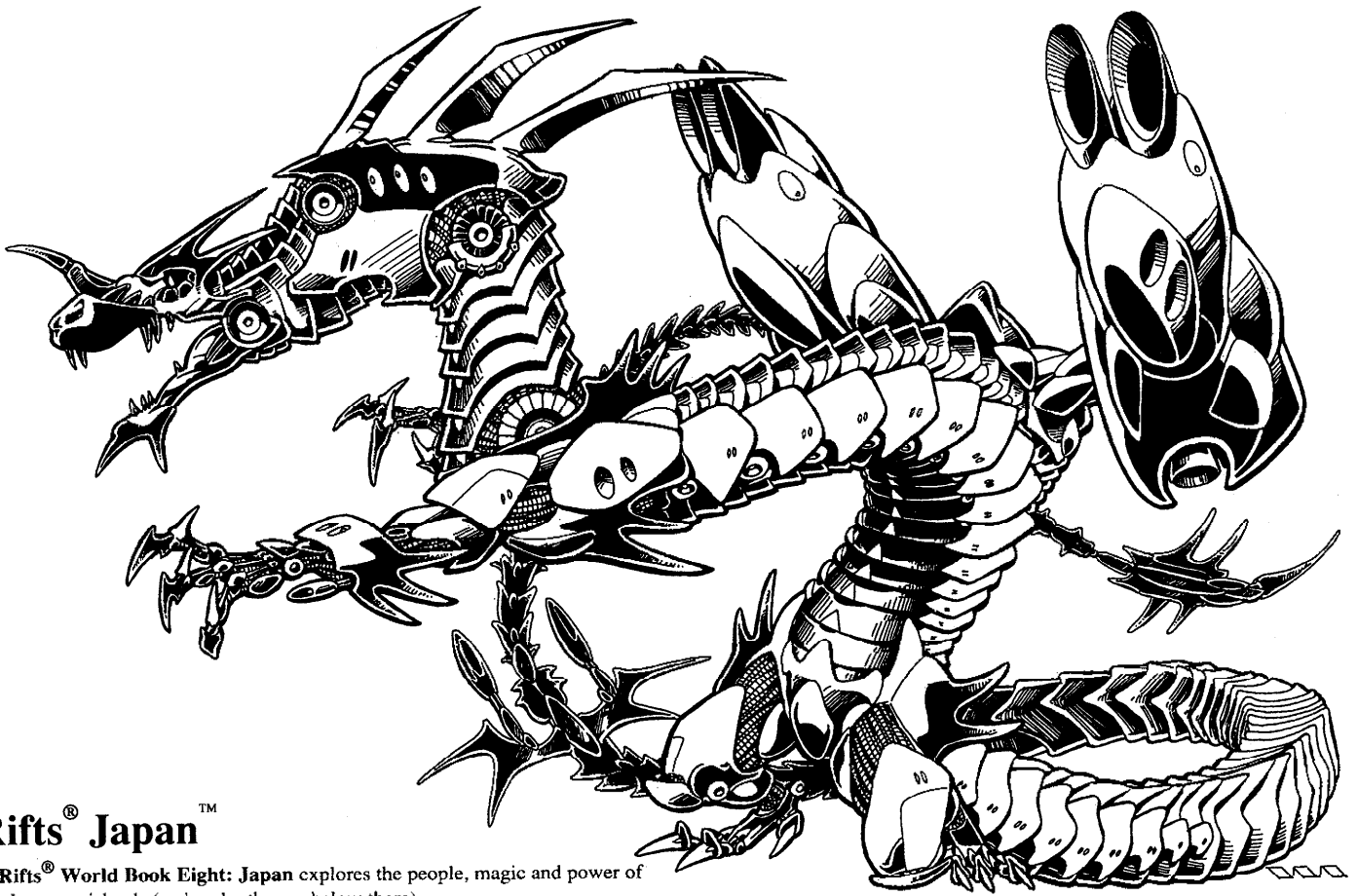
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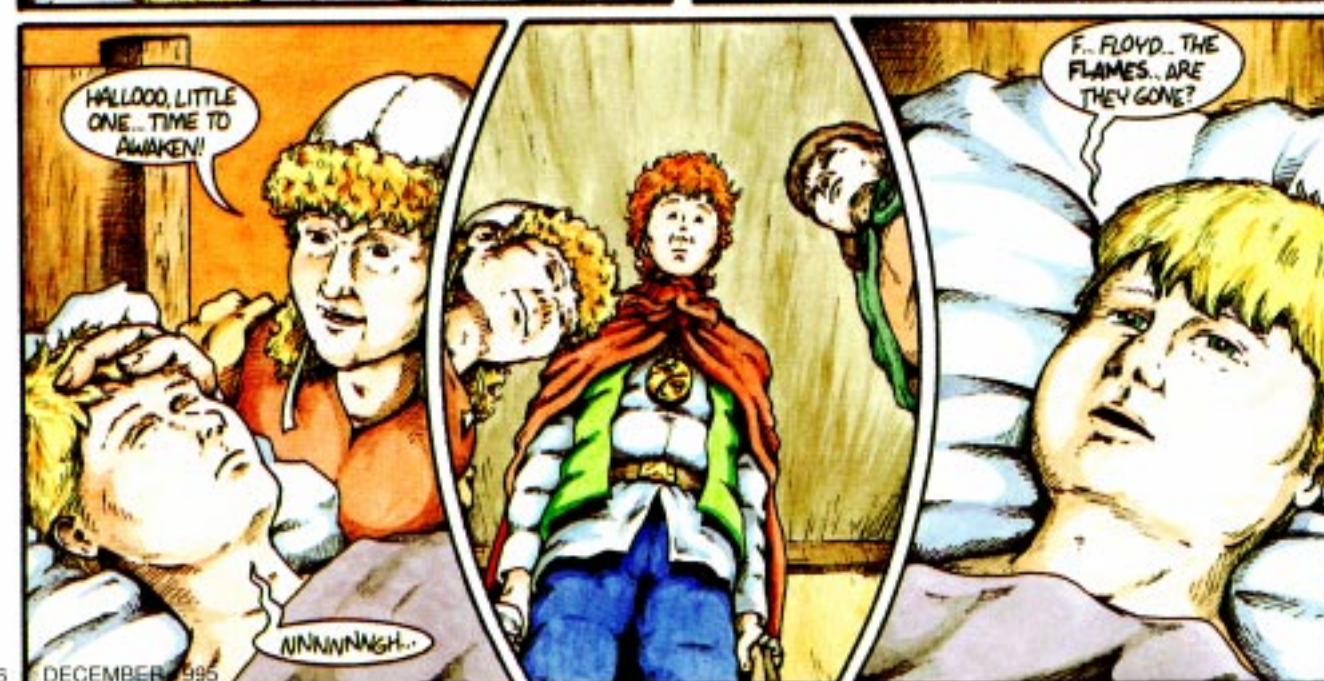
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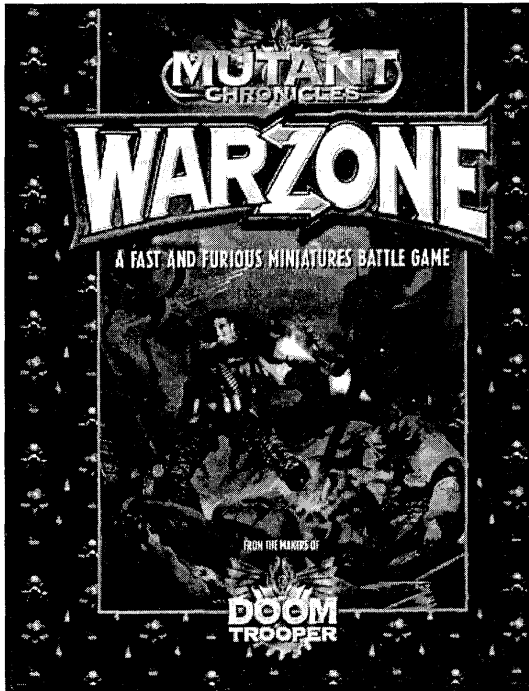




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by Skip Williams

This month the sage pays a brief visit to Krynn, explores optional material for the AD&D® game, and stops to offer advice to a player who's encountered the worst monsters of all.

You can now submit questions to the Sage through e-mail. Send your questions to: ttrsage@aol.com; we regret that personal replies to questions are not possible.

Are bards on Krynn (the DRAGONLANCE® world) required to take the test of high sorcery? If a the test is required and a bard decides not to take it, how long will it be before the character is considered a renegade? Do bards have to choose an order of high sorcery?

Krynn has no native bards at all, so the question of a test is moot. Bards from other worlds need not take a test, but once the native wizards discover that a visiting bard can cast wizard spells they will offer the bard membership in one of the orders. If the bard refuses, he becomes a renegade immediately. A bard who joins an order receives no bonuses or penalties from Krynn's moons, but must abide by his order's spell limitations.

The shield proficiency table on page 72 of the PLAYER'S OPTION™: Combat & Tactics book shows the bonuses for a normal shield user and a proficient user. However, page 115 of the PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers book says the proficiency bonus is added to the normal bonus. Which is correct? For example, if a character with shield proficiency is wearing chain mail and carrying a small shield, is his Armor Class 1 or 2?

No matter which set of rules you use, you apply the proficiency bonus to the character's normal (unshielded) Armor Class. The character in your example would have an Armor Class of 3 (AC 5 chain mail and an additional +2 for proficient use of a small shield). Note that a bonus from a small shield can be used against only two opponents at a time. If the character faces three opponents, one of them gets to attack AC 5. Of course, opponents attacking from the character's rear or unshielded flank always ignore the shield.

Exactly when are the sprinting checks described on page 13 of the Skills & Powers book required?

Whenever a character tries to sprint, of course. The reference on page 13 refers to the Jogging and Running optional rule in Chapter 14 of the *Player's Handbook*. If a character has a Stamina score, you check that rather than making Strength checks when a character tries to move faster than normal.

Although both the Combat & Tactics and Skills & Powers books have rules for weapon mastery, C&T has two extra levels, high mastery and grand mastery. What are the character point costs for these two levels of mastery. What are the costs for martial arts high mastery and grand mastery?

A level of weapon mastery costs the same number of character points. For example, each level of mastery costs a single-classed fighter 2 character points. That is, once a fighter is a specialist, it costs 2 character points to become a master, 2 more to become a high master, and another 2 to become a grand master. Note that mastery isn't something that just happens, the character has to make a special effort in addition to spending the points. Unarmed and martial arts mastery works the same way. If you're using the optional rule from the *Skills & Powers* book that allows multi-classed fighters, paladins, and rangers to become weapon specialists, these characters have to spend 8 character points on each level of mastery.

Page 21 of the Skills & Powers book allows wizards to purchase a combat bonus for 10 character points; however, a mage only gets to use a rogue's THACO. On the very next page, specialist wizards can gain a priest's THACO for the same measly 10 points. Is this a mistake?

Yes it is a mistake. Any wizard who purchases a combat bonus gains a priest's THACO.

Just how does a polymorph other spell take effect? Does the change in form take place in a puff of smoke? Or does the subject change more gradually, sprouting wings or scales or whatever? If the latter case is true, will a dispel magic cast before the change is

complete strand the subject in some intermediate form?

The answer to this one is entirely up to the DM. There could be a puff of smoke, a twinkle, or the subject could simply begin growing new body parts, as you suggest. In any case, the change is complete by the end of the round in which the spell is cast. Once the spell takes effect, the subject cannot do anything that isn't possible in the assumed form. That is, a griffon that fails its saving throw and is turned into a goldfish loses its ability to fly the instant the spell strikes. A successful *dispel magic* that takes effect before the change is finished instantly returns the subject back to its original form.

Isn't the long spear a little too potent? The Complete Fighter's Handbook, The Arms and Equipment Guide, and Combat & Tactics all make this weapon better against man-sized opponents (2d6 points of damage) than the two-handed sword or any pole arm.

I'm inclined to agree that the long spear is a little over rated. I suggest you treat this weapon as just a longer version of the two-handed spear: damage 1d6 + 1/2d6, type p, speed 8 (slow). That's still a little better than an awl pike, but in the *Combat & Tactics* system the awl pike has a reach of 3 and the long spear has a reach of only 2. Pole arms don't inflict much more damage than the revised long spear, but if you're using the *Combat & Tactics* rules most polearms either have better speed factors or better knockdown dice.

What happens when a wand or staff breaks? In our group, we had always assume that these items went boom. Not long ago, one of our characters snapped a wand of lightning an NPC was holding. As the rest of the party cowered, the DM frantically turned pages in the rulebook, looking for the section on exploding wands. We couldn't find any such rule.

When a wand, staff, or rod breaks, you have a broken and useless magical item; that's all. Your group probably was thinking of the retributive strike power of the *staff of the magi*, and *staff of power*. A wizard using either of these two staves can produce a blast of energy by breaking the staff. This is a special power that must be deliberately invoked. If the staff is broken normally there is no special effect.

If a character is fighting a monster that has poison, paralyzation, or a similar special attack, does the character have to attempt a saving throw each time the monster hits, or just the first time?

If a monster has a special attack that works automatically when the monster scores a hit in combat, the opponent must roll a saving throw each time he is hit. For example, a character fighting a ghast must roll a saving throw vs. paralyzation each time the ghast hits. Every time the ghast

gets its teeth or claws into the character, there is a chance the graveyard filth on them will get into the wound and affect the character. Note that the character only has to save once against the ghast's stench.

In the new psionics system presented in the *Skills & Powers* book, what happens if a character involved in psionic combat chooses not to defend? For instance, suppose the attacker uses *mind thrust*. The defender might inadvertently give the attacker a +5 attack bonus if he chooses the wrong defense. If, however, the defender opts for no defense at all he forces the attacker to roll against the defender's base Mental Armor Class, right? What happens if the attacker rolls and succeeds? Is the defender's mind automatically forced open? Or would he just lose PSPs as in normal psionic combat?

Technically, a psionist or wild talent doesn't have the option to present no defense if he has PSPs remaining. The character *must* choose a defense from the list of from the list of defenses he knows and he must spend the PSPs required to mount that defense. If the character's PSP total is so low that there aren't enough PSPs available to power the defense desired, I recommend allowing the character to choose a defense normally; just give the attacker a +2 attack bonus to reflect the feeble defense.

If a psionist really doesn't want to mount a defense, you might decide to let him so chose. In that case, give the attacker a +2 attack bonus. If the attack is successful, the defender's mind is forced open and remains open for 1d4 + 1 rounds.

What, exactly, happens when a character with a high Intelligence score encounters an illusion? The section on Intelligence in the *Player's Handbook* says the character notices some inconsistency in the illusion that automatically allows the character to make his saving throw. Does this mean the character always makes his saving throw when there is one? Or does it mean that the character automatically disbelieves the illusion?

If you follow the rules to the letter, creatures with Intelligence scores of 19 or higher automatically make successful saving throws against low-level illusions, as shown on Table 4 in the PHB. If the illusion in question does not allow a saving throw, then the character is still affected. For example, a character with an Intelligence score of 20 is automatically unaffected by any illusion/phantasm spells of 1st or 2nd level, provided they allow saving throws. The character could ignore an *improved phantasmal force* spell, which allows a saving throw, but is affected normally by a *mirror image* spell, which does not allow a saving throw.

When in doubt, check the spell description. If the saving throw entry at the beginning of the spell says "None" the spell has no saving throw. Note that for classic illusions such as *phantasmal force*, *improved phantasmal force*, *spectral force*, and the like, a saving throw and disbelief are one in the same. That's why these spells have saving throws listed as "Special." Normally, characters have to do something (state disbelief) before they roll saving throws against these spells. Creatures with very high Intelligence scores get to disbelieve (and save) automatically.

All of the foregoing aside, the original AD&D game gave creatures with very high Intelligence scores complete immunity to *all* illusion/phantasm spells of a certain level or below. (as shown in the current PHB). Using this approach is completely within the spirit of the rules, it won't affect game balance in your game very much, and it keeps arguments to a minimum.

A rakshasa is immune to spells lower than 8th level. Does this apply to priest spells? Is a rakshasa also immune to spell-like effects from wands, staves, and rods? What about other magical items?

Yes, rakshasas are immune to priest spells of level 7 or less, which is all priest spells except quest spells (from the *Tome of Magic*) and true dweomers (from *PLAYER'S OPTION: High-Level Campaigns*). Generally,

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any immunity or limitation based on a spell's level applies equally to priest and wizard spells.

Level-based spell immunity protects against spell-like effects from magical items if the spells they mimic are of levels low enough to be defeated themselves. A rakshasa, for example, is unaffected by *fireballs* or *lightning bolts* from any source, be they spells, wands, staves, or other magical items. A character with an Intelligence score of 20 is immune *audible glamor* and *phantasmal force* effects from a *wand of illusion*.

If a character who is unconscious—not dead—receives a *resurrection* or *raise dead* spell, does the character still have to attempt a resurrection survival roll to stay alive?

Neither of these spells have any effect on living creatures (though their reversed forms do). No living creature, unconscious or otherwise, has to make a resurrection survival check when subjected to one of these spells.

A character using the psionic devotion *time shift* cannot affect anything while shifted. But what happens if the character positions himself for an instant kill? Say the character throws an arm around an enemy's neck and puts the point of a knife at the base of the enemy's skull and applies a little pres-

sure so that the minute time catches up to the time-shifted character the point goes right in? The power description says the user gets a +4 attack bonus, but I'm having a hard time coming up with a logical reason why that kind of maneuver won't work.

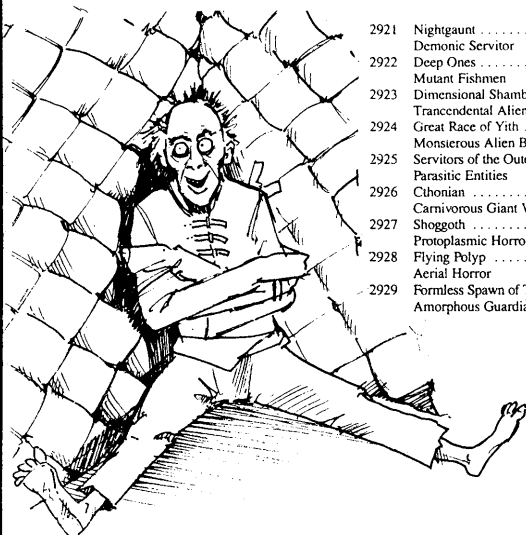
The absolute best offensive advantage *time shift* can provide is a +4 attack bonus; instant kills are beyond the power's capabilities. The reason the time shifter can't achieve an instant kill is that the power shunts the character into an alternate reality all his own. The character can view future events in the main time line, but what he sees isn't exactly what happens. He can grab an opponent by the neck and stick a knife in a vital spot, but when he returns to the main time line neither he nor his opponent are exactly where the time shifter saw them while in the alternate reality.

A little less than a year ago, my boyfriend introduced me to the AD&D game, and I enjoy it very much. I'm also pretty good at it, and the local players quickly dropped their reservations about having a newbie in the group and invited me into the campaign. I have several characters who have become important in the campaign, and I've kept a detailed journal of all my character's adventures. Not

long ago, my boyfriend and I had a private (not game related) disagreement, and the gaming group decided to take his side. Now, I'm barred from the campaign, and the DM says I can't play my characters anywhere else. (One of my characters started out as an NPC that the DM gave me to play.) Someone in the group even walked into my house while I was away and took my characters and my dice. It was probably the DM; he often uses the game to get his own way. If a player doesn't do what he wants, the player's character gets killed in the next game. I'm really mad because the DM won't give my characters back. My boyfriend and I aren't playing anymore, but I still want my characters back. Can a DM tell a player not to use a character anymore? As a capable female player I used to be pretty hot commodity, but now I'm barred from the game. What should I do? The only thing I can think of now is to sock the DM in the gut until he gives me my stuff (and believe me, I have some friends who would be delighted to do just that). I just want to play AD&D.

The first thing you should do is step back and take a few deep breaths. If you're involved in a campaign where people carry grudges from real life into the game, and also take them back to real life again, it's high time you found a new campaign.

HOLD ON TO YOUR SANITY, RAFM HAS

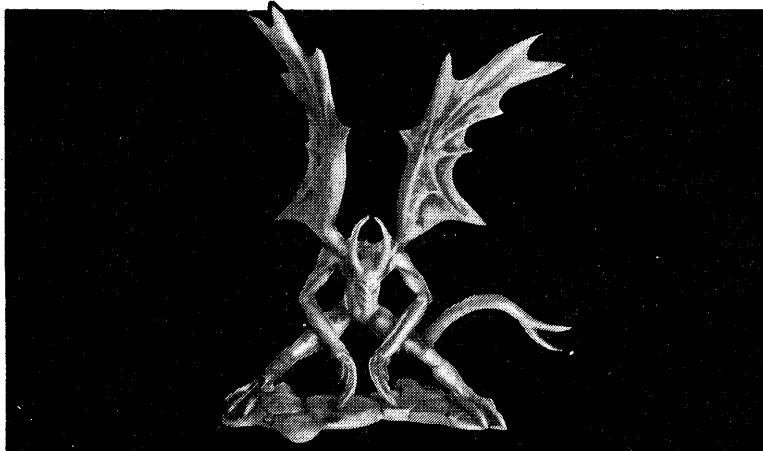


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If you can walk away from it after losing only a few characters and a bag of dice, you should feel lucky. Take a little time away from the game; judging from the full text of your letter (six pages), I'd say your gaming has put you under entirely too much emotional stress. Gaming is supposed to be *fun*.

To answer your rules question, no, there's nothing in the books that says DMs can tell their players what characters to use in other campaigns. If you've got a character you like—even a dead character—from an old campaign and you think it would be fun to play it somewhere else, go right ahead. You should explain to the new DM, however, that you've played the character before. Some DMs don't like to accept recycled characters.

As far as your future involvement in the campaign and any further attempts to get your property (dice and characters) back, here are my suggestions:

First, find another campaign to play in. There are literally millions of AD&D players out there, so your entire AD&D game experience does not depend on this one group. Better yet, start a campaign of your own. Stop being flattered that a group of veterans took you in and start showing a group of newbies how to play the game right—you've certainly got plenty of experience with a game that is played wrong. Your journal should give you plenty of ideas for a campaign of your own.

Second, give up on the NPC you adopted. It's churlish of the DM who gave you the character to ask you not to play it anymore, but the character is not worth the struggle, no matter how much you love it. If you're as good at the game as you say you are, you'll have no trouble creating another great character on your own. Besides, if the DM is on a power trip you'll deny him the satisfaction he gets from withholding the character from you. If you're really fond of the character, create a new character based on the one you lost. Perhaps the new character is the original character's twin, who has gone out adventuring to find out why the original character mysteriously disappeared.

Third, either take legal action to get your stolen property back or let it go. Do not under any circumstance "sock" the DM in the gut or send your friends to snatch your property back. If your former gaming comrades took your property without your permission they're guilty of theft, pure and simple. That is a matter for the police, not for you or for your friends. On the other hand, you can always create new characters and buy new dice. Doing so probably will take less time, effort and anguish than wrestling with the legal system, especially since your case probably isn't going to enjoy a very high priority with the local police and district attorney. It's up to you.

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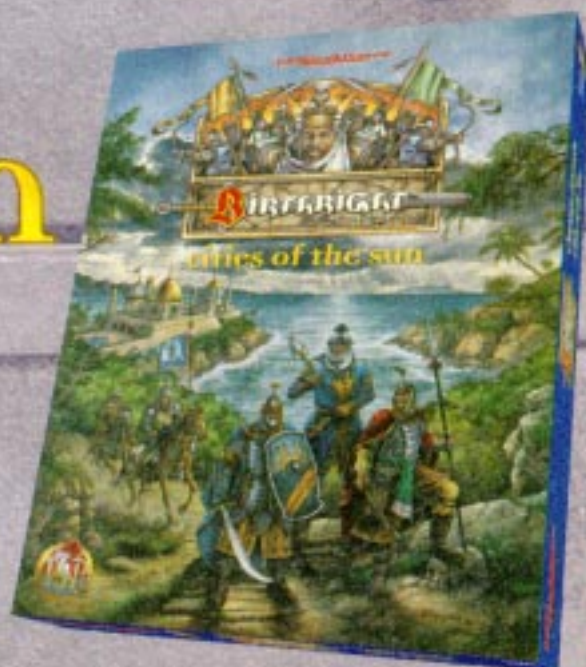


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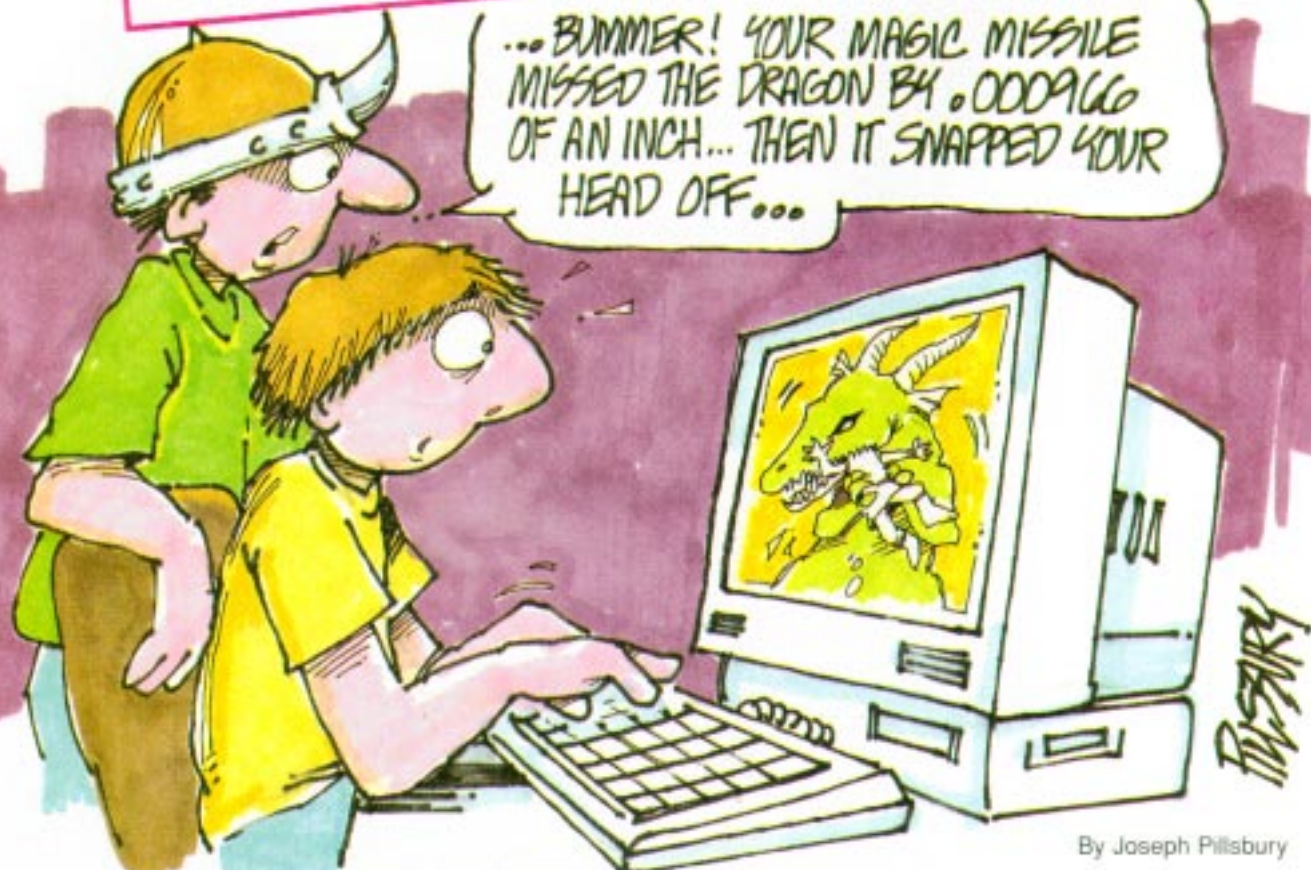
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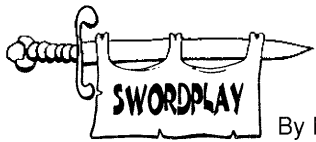
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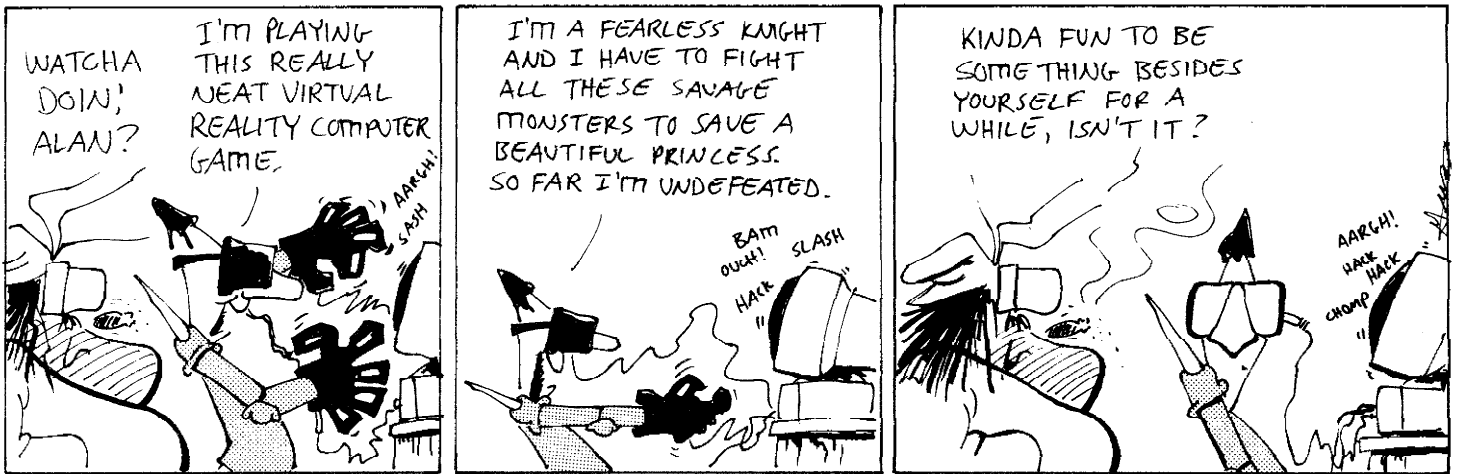
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AS CAPTAIN, OUTRAGEOUS OR OTHERWISE, OF THIS VESSEL, "THE DARK TREACLE," BY THE POWER INVESTED IN ME BY OUR CO-CREATORS, AND OUR CO-CREATORS' GOD, AND BY THE LAWS OF THE SPACE/NAVAL FLEETS OF EVERY RPG SYSTEM, I HEREBY PRONOUNCE YOU MAN AND WIFE, WOMAN AND HUSBAND, JOINED AT THE HIP UNTIL SOMEBODY'S CONSTITUTION SCORE GIVES OUT.



I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU, JOE. I REALLY SHOULD HAVE MENTIONED MY PACT WITH THE DARK GODDESS BEFORE NOW...

SHE WILL NEVER FIT IN THAT DRESS AGAIN.

WELL, THAT'S ONE REASON SOME WOMEN RISK DYING AND BEING RAISED BEFORE THEIR WEDDINGS. JUST SO THEY CAN SLIMMING—



IT IS NOW SAFE TO KISS EACH OTHER.

NO. WE CAN NEVER BE SAFE. I HAVE TRADED RESURRECTION FOR A HOPELESS QUEST AGAINST YOCCHI, RULER OF THE WORLD—

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THIS IS MATRON STRESS. CALL OFF YOUR ATTACK!

THESE ARE MY SHIPS! HEY!! STOP THAT!! @#% IT, I'M COMMISSIONED YOU!!

WE'RE SORRY! YOUR MAGIC HAS BEEN DISCONNECTED OR IS NO LONGER IN SERVICE. PLEASE CONT.

YOCCHI, YOU %!+@#

—NOW EVERY MAN WILL BE AFTER US, AFTER ME, PERHAPS FOR THE REST OF OUR FLEETING TIME TOGETHER.

...WOW. I THOUGHT ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT FIREWORKS WAS JUST HACKNEYED, OVERRATED TRIP!

WE'RE GENUINELY UNDER ATTACK, HONEY.

...OH, WELL. WHO'S PAYING ATTENTION?

PERSEY?? HOW DO I BACKSTAB A LIGHT CRUISER?? —PERSEY??



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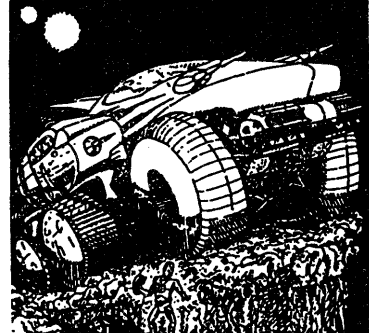
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e were known as the
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Soldiers. We had traveled a

great distance to reach the foothills of the Roaring Mountains, wherein lay the temple of my forefathers, an ancient stronghold against evil but one long forgotten to song and tale. At first, our journey went easily, but as we climbed higher into the mountains, the way became more difficult. With each step our muscles ached and our backs strained under our load.

On the 15th day of our journey, we spotted orc tracks. As fate would have it, the weather grew foul we were pelted by wind and rain.

On the 21st night, before dawn, we were attacked. After a fierce battle, those that remained of us made for the heights. Half way up, our path was suddenly blocked by boulders and felled trees. An ambush. The orcs flew over them with mad glee, outnumbering us ten to one. We ran, fighting as we fled, but were lost; our strength was waning, and the last of our arrows was spent. No amount of valor could hold off so numerous an enemy for long. One by one we fell; there were just the three of us now, the other four unmoving at our feet. I, too, finally began to give in to the pain, to the exhaustion.

As I fell, a crack of light slammed into the orcs. They cried in sudden shock and panic. Another bolt of light flashed before me; the scent of sulfur and burnt flesh filled my nostrils. Again and again lightning exploded in the orcish ranks, and they fell back. In the sky appeared winged lion-beasts who dove at the orcs with flames and lightning leaping from their massive paws.¹ My head throbbed horribly, and as my thoughts faded into darkness, in my delirium, I could have sworn that I was flying over the battlefield, watching orcs squirm in the grasps of trees.²

We awoke to find ourselves lying on piles of fresh rushes in a bare room with no windows and only one heavy wooden door. We were in the temple. My limbs ached and my mouth felt parched, but I was otherwise in good health; though we still wore our tattered and stained garb, our wounds were healed, and our hands and faces were clean of blood.

"What were those beasts?" I asked. "What do they want from us?"

"They're manticores," said Lorien.

"They've brought us here to eat us at their leisure."



The Lammasu

by Belinda G. Ashley

Artwork by Tom Baxa

"I don't think so," Sharyllon said. "I've never seen a manticore cast a lightning bolt."

"Manticores wouldn't bother healing us just to turn around and eat us," Bromar added. "Maybe we can reason with them."

As we slowly, painfully, rose to our feet, the bolt on the door pull back. The doorway was at once filled with the body of one of the winged lion-beasts. Though its mane and eyes were that of a lion, the face was human and wore an amused expression.

"Well, warriors," it said, humor in the baritone voice, "I'm glad to see that you're awake. My name is Raliendar of the Krondak Pride and I am to be your advisor."³

I introduced our company and—with more than a bit of apprehension—asked what he planned to do with us.

He gave a deep chuckle. "What do you think? Eat you?" Then he laughed a great laugh that made our chests rumble with the sound. "Are the songs so old and forgotten that none know of the Rewarrien, Harwei nak Grwellin? In your language we are called *lammasu*." When we didn't answer, he shook his shaggy head and sighed. "You have much to learn. Well, I would imagine you are all hungry. Dinner is waiting, if you'll follow me please."

We followed Raliendar through ancient marble halls, occasionally catching glimpses inside the rooms. In several, the lion-beasts—*lammasu*, did he say?—lay sprawled across the stone floor, leisurely cleaning their tawny coats and feathered wings. In others, adults supervised playful cubs as they swatted each other with their

paws. Many of the rooms, however, were empty. Raliendar told us that most of the pride had gone to the war council.

"The Defenders and Enlightened are making battle plans to rout the enemy," Raliendar explained.⁴ "We were aware of the orc's army but were waiting for the gathering of Whitemoon to hear from the elders and the Pride Lords. All the prides have now gathered here in preparation of war."

I asked him how many prides there were.

"There are six within the area you call the Wilderlands. Each one is responsible for keeping a lookout for such evils as this. Come, let me show you something." He stopped in front of two ornately carved doors and opened them for us to see within. On the floor of the room, drawn in chalk, was a detailed map of the area. A dozen or more stern faced *lammasu* bent their heads over the map, speaking in tense tones.

"They look different from you somehow," I whispered.

"These are the Pride Lords; they are the greater *lammasu*." See the tall one to the far right? That is Krondak, our Lord," said Raliendar proudly.

Raliendar told us that each pride's Defenders, Enlightened, and Pride Lords were here discussing tactics for the upcoming battle. "The Enlightened are informers and surveyors. They give the Defenders the needed information to lay battle plans. The Defenders are our protectors; they use strategy and spells to drive back and defeat our enemies."

He turned and motioned us to follow. We passed from the war room into a brightly lit hall. In the center of the room stood a large table with heavy oak chairs. Arranged on the table was an assortment of fresh vegetables and melons. "Ah! Your meals are ready," said Raliendar. "I am sorry that we do not have utensils for you; we have little need of such items."

Bromar looked at the food hesitantly, "Will you be serving any meat by chance?" Raliendar frowned, "We do not eat the flesh of animals with whom we share our homes. We are not the only ones to live under the sanctuary of the Temple. There are many here who help us in our cause and deserve protection."

"Of whom else do you speak?" I asked. "I've seen no one here but you lammasu."

"Well, there are the forest creatures that help us keep an eye on things. And then, of course, there are the brownies."⁷

"Brownies!" we said in unison.

Dalysyn looked shocked. "Brownies up here? In this rocky area?"

Raliendar chuckled softly. "Of course! They help us tend the gardens. Beyond the ridge is a green valley in which we grow our food. It is not cultivated like the gardens of man, and to the uneducated eye it looks like an overgrown meadow. But with the brownies' help we've more than enough food to keep everyone happy. Enough questions. Eat! I must see how the council fares. Wander around as you please; I shall join you later."

After eating, we strolled around the buildings and headed for the temple. We had not actually seen it as yet; we had only wandered through the outlying halls and living quarters. Climbing the well-worn steps, we came to a level courtyard, and there, across the uneven stones, it stood.

I trembled with excitement. The building glowed with the setting rays of sunlight and from within floated the beautiful sound of voices. We entered solemnly. Before us stood dozens of lammasu singing before a golden altar. Amber light poured through stained glass windows, bathing their tawny bodies in a holy radiance. Though their words were unknown to me, the purity of the song overwhelmed my heart with peace.

Raliendar later joined us and asked if we would come with him. We passed from the temple through a tiled foyer and entered a small chapel called the Tomb of Souls. "Beneath these marble stones," he said, "Lie your forefathers. We have kept these tombs sacred for many an age against the dark rulers who would defile this holy place."

He spent most of the night telling us about his kind. We discovered he was a Healer and one of those who had rescued us from the orcs. Healers, he told us, weren't just for healing wounds of the body but for healing the soul as well. They dedicate their lives to teach the pride the sacred songs of the First Elders. "Song

worship is how we keep our history and faith in our gods."⁸

"First Elders?"

"The Illuminated Ones. The first pair to have walked upon the world and breathed life into our kind. Rhamaldrig the Father, Lord Protector, and Chareah the Mother, Queen of Knowledge."⁹

After our wounds healed, our company lent a hand in the great battle against the orcs for which our hosts had been planning. We were amazed at the organization of the lammasu. Every member, except the cubs and den mothers, helped in the conflict against the orcs.¹⁰ An entire pride would make themselves invisible, split into three units, and set up an attack. We joined them on the second day of battle as part of the second line of attackers.

The morning sun had not yet risen, and the sky was still a misty grey. Rain fell on leaves with a soft pitter-patter, muffling our footsteps through the woods. The lammasu had spotted a small group of orcs that had become separated from the main army; this was our target. The Enlightened positioned themselves on the orc's left and right flanks as we positioned ourselves in the center. Silently we drew our swords and bows and tensed ourselves for the moment of battle.

Without warning, the Enlightened hurled their first attack. Bushes and small pines grasped the enemy in leafy boughs. Orcs yelped in surprise, struggling with their woody opponents. Lightning leapt into their ranks and sent those not yet entangled running for their lives.

The Lords and Defenders descended from the air, sending bursts of flames among the orcs. We rushed forward, keeping clear of the entangling plants, and set upon the retreating enemy. The Healers, who were hidden at the rear of the orc army, cast a wall of spiked plants to prevent escape. No orc escaped their wrath. After a week, the orc army dispersed and scattered across the great Wilderlands.

Months went by; heavy rains held us within the mountain's grasp. Yet the Temple was dry and comfortable, and so we spent a peaceful season within its halls. But alas, with the coming of summer our spirits once more yearned for adventure, and we readied ourselves for the long march ahead. We gave heartfelt farewells to our new friends and set ourselves on the path homeward.

Several years have passed, and I can still recall the beauty and splendor of the lammasu and their great love of song. Most of all I remember their cunning and courage against their enemies. And now, on every Fallfest, I raise a toast: To the lammasu, for bravery, wisdom, and justice, I salute you. May the gods' breath be always under your wings.

1. Common spells that the lammasu use in combat are, *lightning bolt*, *produce flame*,

entangle, *plant growth*, and *spike growth*.

2. Lammasu will seldom allow any to ride upon their backs except in dire need, and the being carried must be small-sized or smaller. They can, however, carry large items grasped in their great forelimbs for short distances. Their maneuverability class in this case would be two levels lower than normal.

3. A pride consists of 10–35 members and takes the name of its lord. All members of the pride are responsible for foraging for food, raising the young, and keeping their dens clean and orderly.

4. The lammasu have a strict hierarchy. Each member of a pride belongs to one of three groups: Defenders, Enlightened, or Healers. Each of the three groups is commanded by an elder. Though all lammasu can cast spells, each group memorizes spells that benefit his group. For example, the Enlightened would take *detect* spells, *endure cold/heat*, *pass without trace*, *know alignment*, and *messenger* as typical spells to have for surveillance.

5. The Pride Lord is not of any one group but is representative of all groups. The elder of each group chooses the Pride Lord; these four, elders and lord, will always be greater lammasu unless there are none available for these positions. The Pride Lord is always a male.

6. Greater lammasu have black tipped manes, tails, and wing feathers.

7. Lammasu get along well with most sylvan creatures, but they are especially fond (and protective) of brownies, who are also lawful good. Brownies will always show up when lammasu are near, no matter the area, and will offer their help in tending the gardens and doing any occasional writing needing to be done (as lammasu can not hold pens with their massive paws).

8. The lammasu keep no written records of their histories; however, they have excellent memories and use song and stories to pass on the knowledge of one generation to another.

9. Rhamaldrig and Chareah are celestial lammasu. (See *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*® tome 8.)

10. "Den mother" is a term used to denote those responsible for the young and does not refer to gender.

Other Notes

The lammasu do not have infravision but have eyesight as keen as a cat and can see well even on a moonless night. They also have sensitive hearing.

Lammasu mate for life and live to be approximately 150 years old. Greater lammasu can live to be as old as 200. During their life they will only have two or three breeding periods, giving birth to one to two cubs per period.

Of the three groups, the Enlightened are the most likely to run into PCs, as they are often out scouting their terrain for trouble.

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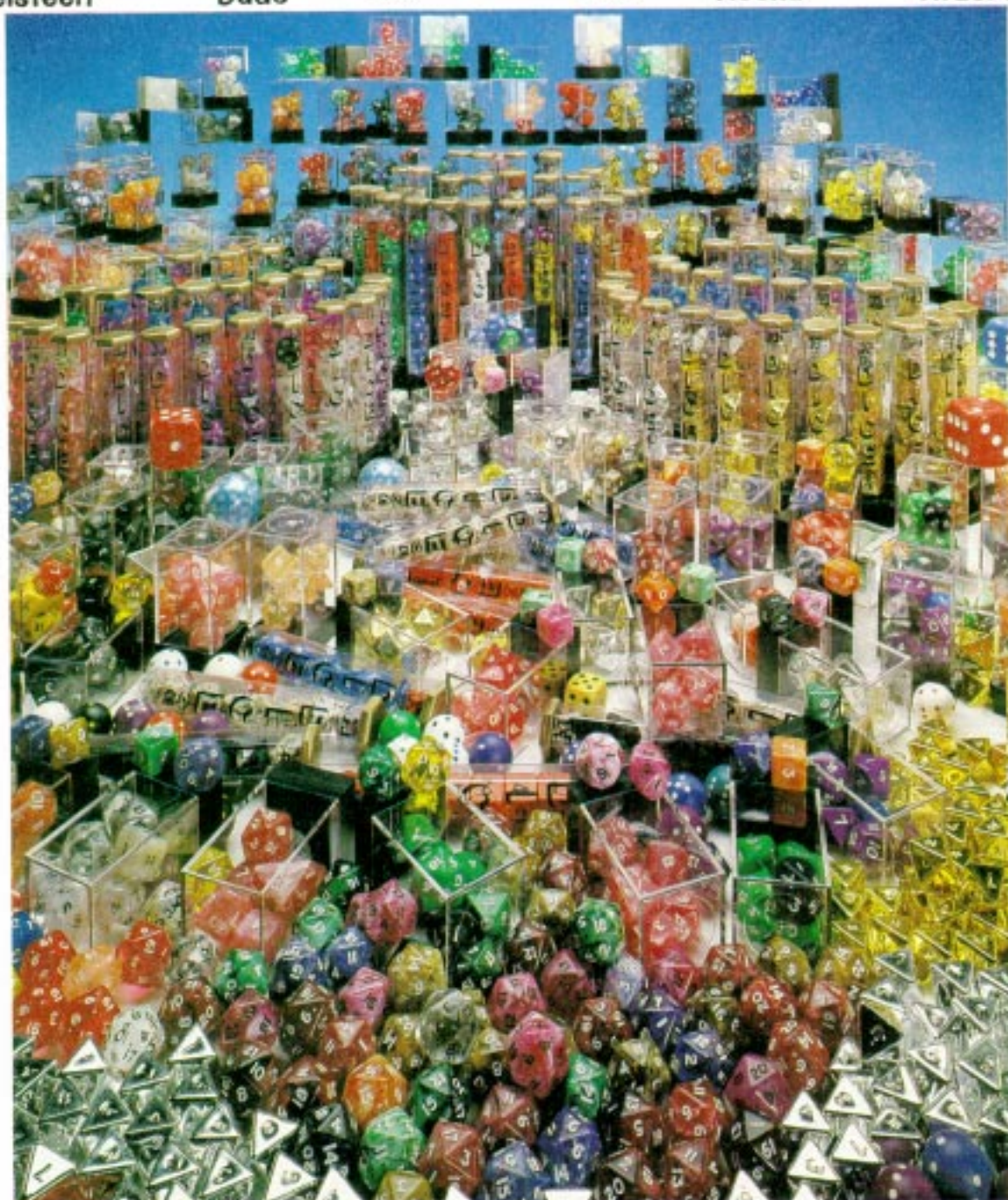
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